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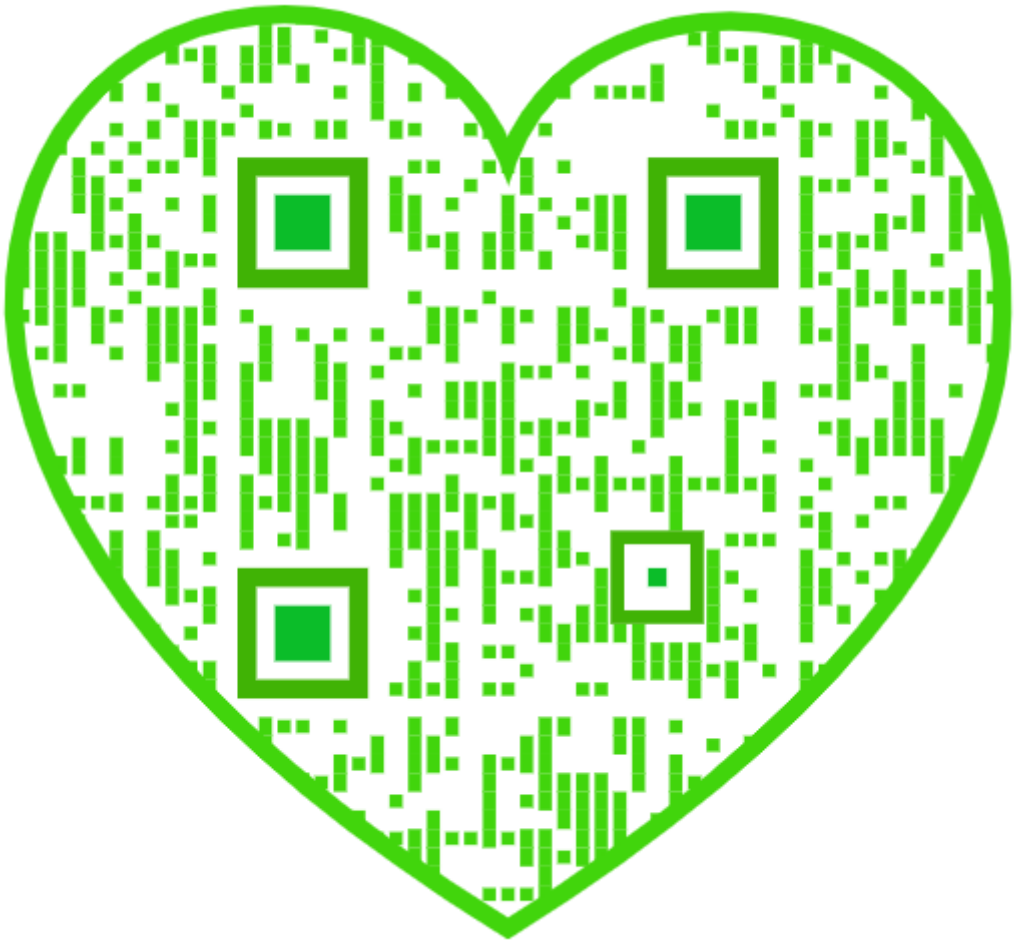

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Mededeling

Frank Martinus Arion werd 17 december 1936 op Curaçao geboren. Hij is sedert 1955 in Nederland woonachtig, waar hij in 1957 zijn diploma Staatsexamen A heeft behaald en thans aan de Leidse Universiteit als student in de Nederlandse taal en -letterkunde is ingeschreven.

Hij behoort tot de oprichters van de actieve vereniging van Antilliaanse studerenden in Nederland ‘Baranca Antillana’.

Redactie Antilliaanse Cahiers

November 1957

Frank Martinus Arion
Stemmen uit Afrika

ter nagedachtenis aan mijn moeder

I

Langzaam gaan van kusten
naar de diepe binnenlanden,
rijen van toeristen met een gids.

dof tamboe-geroffel
van de negers in het woud.

tam-tam-tam.

ze gaan en struikelen
op stammen van gevallen
oude reuzebomen.

speren in het rond
getatoueerde negers
en dof-tamboe-geroffel.

een zwarte wind vaart
door de kroon van varens.

negers trommelen de boodschap
van hun komen naar de negers
in het woud.

II

Uit de bijenkorf
van mijn geboorte
ben ik uitgegleden
in het eenzaam woud.

als toeristen-gids.

een neger oud
vertoonde kluchten
aan een tandeloze negerin.

het woud was donker;
ik was zwart.
maar zwart vermengde
zich met donker.

zingen van spirituals
en zingen ook van zuchten.

ik zong mee en werd dus dichter.
zwart-zwart.

III

Eens zijn alle negers
tamtammend uitgevaren
uit hun zwart-ompaalde
negorijen.

hun prauwen schoren
over de rivieren,
dwalend door 't woud.

eens, maar eens is ver
en eens is langgeleden.

nu gaan zij als karbouwen,
mak-geslagen, lam.
beroofd van hun tam-tam
en slepen stenen aan
waar anderen bouwen.

IV

De negers vieren feest,
met fakkels en flambouw.

kokosnoten hangen zwaar
aan ijle palmen.

en dansen mee
als d'alleroudste zonde.

uit Noe's naakt,
uit Noe's druivenschuld
verschijnt nu Cham.

en lacht van druivensap
nog grillig-dronken.

negers hebben witte tanden.
negers hebben zwarte handen.

ze lachen grijnzend als ze feesten.
maar zelfs hun lachen lijkt op wenen.

V

Dit volk komt misschien
nooit meer op-recht,
al stut men het met balken.

het baarde eens de grootste
reuzen van dit woud,
dit donker Afrika.
als een moeder zoog
het eens Europa....

het stond hoog en trok
de stralen van de zon
in 't luchtruim van de dag.

het stond hóóg
maar viel. verpletterd
door de kracht van blanke stenen.

VI

De krokodillen en de leeuwen
samen met het nijlpaard en het hert:
ze vluchten voor de kracht
en macht der jonge negers;

en huilend barst het woud
in kreten die zwepen op,
over de ravijnen en kaatsen
diep in de dalen van
bergen hoog en heuvels groen.

en de krokodillen en de leeuwen,
brullen in hun wonden
en hijgen als ze sterven.

ergens achter bomen,
gaapt een olifant.
- eenzame paria -

de neger jaagt.
hij gilt en joelt
in strijd de hemel open;
maar zelf ook gelijk
de dieren, nagejaagd.

VII

Aan lianen kronkelt zich
een bruine chimpansee.
dan schrijdt een donker
mens de dag voorbij:

vliegt op platte voeten
de koning van het woud.

bomen en bladeren loven,
ruisen en schudden
in grimassen van de aap.

andere chimpansee's,
uitgelaten bokkesprongen hoog
in aanbidding voor hun koning.

chi-chi-, o koning!

maar als hij de grenzen
schendt van zijn ompaald domein,
hij wordt een slaaf,
hij wordt een wrak.

VIII

Het negerhart begeert,
gelijk het hart van alle
primitieven die op hem gelijken
geen grens te overschrijden.

het negerhart verlangt alleen
het donker licht van eenvoud,
de morgen en de avond,
op de paden van zijn woud.

de neger zoekt geen goud;
enkel spiegels, enkel kralen
voor zijn korven en zijn hut.

is de wereld niet zo groot,
is er van alles niet zo veel?

waarom geen goud en zilver
aan de een en kraal en spiegel
aan de ander man gelaten?

waarom zowel het goud, alsook
het zilver, de spiegel
en de kraal, voor een alleen?

IX

Eenzaamheid was het geluk
van deze wilde mensen.
duisternis hun graf.

en ziet ge, waar het water
walst naar duisternis;
uit dorst de bomen buigen
naar de pappige moerassen....
daar leefden zij.

toen kwamen met lawaai
en ogen wilder dan
gorilla's ogen, anderen.

en graaiden en handen
ontvoerden mensen en planten
naar veel witter wouden.
naar hel-verlichte steden.

maar de witte steden zijn
voor de negerman te hél.

daar kan een kinderhart,
kunnen kinderbloemen niet
gedijen, tenzij ze niet
zo eenzaam zijn.

X

De negerman, hij strijdt
immer slechts voor wat hij had:
de vrijheid van 't gaan,
het kiezen van zijn graf.

hij strijdt en wankelt;
weerloos, hulpeloos omdat
de wapens van de nieuwe
wereld hem zo vreemd zijn.

de lans die hij hanteert
- de oude eerlijkheid misschien -
doorsteekt hemzelve, voor hij
anderen een steek heeft toegebracht.

En hij heeft geen legers.
O hij strijdt alleen in
het hete vuur, op de kronkel-
wegen van het lot, en blijft
dus keusloos-nederlaag-gedoemd.

XI

Uw glimlach zegt: het is recht
dat ieder strijdt voor wat hij
had: uw glimlach vraagt: maar
wijs mij aan den negerman een vijand.

gij vangt mijn hart in groot gelijk:
waarom dit immer strijden, als geen
hem ooit heeft wat misdaan?

is niet iedereen zijn vriend,
streelt niet iedereen de kralen
van zijn stil-eenvoudig hart?

vindt hij niet in elke straat
een open deur in het witte woud;
en verwenning soms - zoals men
eenzaam dwalende dieren verwent,
en wollige katten in medelijden
op de schoot van oude vrouwen? -

heeft hij niet alles in het
witte woud, een bed, en brood
en doffe medelijden.... zolang
hij neger man zijn anders-zijn,
zijn neger-zijn gedenkt?

XII

Want Pilatus is nog net op tijd
gestorven, en sinds zijn dood
heeft hier op aarde niemand schuld;
is niemand van een ander man de vijand.

want doden zijn de stomste wezens,
ze kunnen niet meer praten,
niet meer stelen, niet meer liegen;
o doden zijn zo eerlijk.

Pilatus is nog net op tijd
gestorven, want nu draagt
niemand de schuld van wat er
hier op aarde wordt misdaan.

O doden zijn zo eerlijk:
ze liggen star en stijf
en zijn zo onschuldig dood.

En toch is ieder bang van
toch eens te moeten sterven.

meer met dure zeep zijn
hand in onschuld wassen.

XIII

Hoort gij nu dat zingen,
dat onbestemd-gevleugeld
onze expeditie is genaderd?

‘Vraag mij niet vanwaar
ik kwam, noch wie mijn
vader was, noch uit welk
moeras mijn moeder rees.

of kan mijn moeder toch de Eva,
mijn vader toch de Adam zijn.’

Neen, vraagt hem niet vanwaar
hij kwam: hij was er, is er,
naast de slijkige moerassen,
de meanderende rivieren....

de schaduwen van wolken,
de spinnewebben om de zon,
heeft hij eeuwen al zien dansen,
de warrelende hete dans
op paden in valleien.

Kom, en vraag hem niet
uit welke streek hij kwam.
hij was er, is er
even hecht als d'oer.

XIV

Vraag hem niet de zwarte man
van welke streek hij kwam.
noch vraag hem wie zijn vader was;
noch uit welk moeras zijn moeder rees,
of kan zijn moeder toch de eva
zijn vader toch de adam zijn?

hij was er, is er,
naast de slijkige moerassen,
meanderende rivieren.

en de schaduwen van wolken
als spinnewebben om de zon
heeft hij eeuwen al zien dansen
de warrelende hete dans,
op paden, in valleien.

vraag hem niet vanwaar hij kwam.
hij was er, is er -
even hecht als d'oer.

XV

Spiritual

Ik ben genodigd voor het feest,
straks ginder in de hemel.
voor het feest straks ginder
in de hemel ben ik genodigd.

Ik ben genodigd voor het feest
voor het feest ben ik genodigd.
ik mag zitten aan de dis.
ik mag zitten aan de dis.

voor het grote feest ben ik genodigd
het feest met zwarte engelen genodigd.

O, ik ben genodigde en gast,
bij het feest van ginder in de hemel.

maar de nodiging heb ik verloren.
verloren heb ik deze nodiging.
zwarte engelen wachten tevergeefs.

ze wachten tevergeefs op mij.
ze wachten tevergeefs op mij....

XVI

Spiritual

Eens zal ik zitten aan een tafel;
lachend aan een tafel zal ik zitten.
aan een tafel zal ik zitten,
lachend aan een tafel zal ik zitten.

en eten en drinken
en eten en drinken.

anderen zullen mij de schotels
dampend binnenbrengen,
de schotels zullen anderen
voor mij eens binnenbrengen.

ik zal eten
ik zal drinken.

anderen zullen mij de schotels
dampend binnenbrengen.

eens zal ik lachend
zitten aan een tafel.

- eens is lang geleden
eens is ver ook in de eeuwigheid. -

XVII

De tocht gaat voort
naar dieper stilte
het wordt nu stil
in de dichtheid om ons heen.

waar wij gaan de bladeren
buigen zacht het hoofd.

de plek waarop wij staan
is maagd, als ongeschapen
ongerept staan hier de bomen.

dan klinkt een stem
zacht gelijk de adem
van de lichte lucht:

‘hier rusten resten van een mens
een zwarte man die woorden sprak
die geen mensenhart verstaat,
een man die Christus heet.

ons mens-zijn werd
door hem ontdekt,
hij stierf in vergetelheid.’

wij deinzen weg en keren naar
een ander Christus-lozer richting.

XVIII

Volg mij, maar de binnenlanden
worden hier haast ondoordringbaar
stugger, hier toont het pad
zich onbetreden door een schoeisel.

hier wonen slechts de onbedwongen
horden van het woud en krijsen
alle dieren wilder.

uit de dikste bomen van dit rijk
zijn zware hutten hier verrezen.
kwaadaardig houden allerwoeste negers,
immerdoor de wacht.

en weer een stem
veel luider nu:
‘hier waken negers
over de laatste resten
van hun dromen,
van hun eer.’

XIX

Te gaan naar waar de neger
in zijn ruige reinheid mint,
is onmogelijk ondoenlijk.

want hij mint altijd
en mint ook overal.

de wiekslag van de gier
een waterval in witte accoorden.
de olifant, de mier,
het grijnzen van de morgen.

hij mint ze allemaal.
en mint zoals alleen
dit ras kan minnen.

belangeloos.

de bloem de zon de aarde

belangeloos.

nimmer doodt hij ook
het schone in de dingen
dat hij in zijn ruigheid mint.

XX

Bij hem is hartstocht liefde.
intrigueloos en schoon.
zoals zijn heden, fier
aan zijn gebrandmerkt lijf.

minnen is voor hem opgaan
in natuurlijk-zijn.
zoals de steen die mint
opgaat in de drift van water.

leven is voor hem de felheid
van de zon voelen
en koelen in de koelte van de nacht.

Zijn God: een rivierbed
een boomstam of een krater.

hij aanbidt Hem in 't goddelijke
schitter-kleed van al zijn naaktheid.

alleen de oermens kan dit schone
zo intens beleven. in al zijn on-
bedorvenheid: hij, naief, kinderlijk,
en argeloos en schaamteloos.

XXI

Wacht, hier offeren de negers
aan de goden die leven steeds
in hen; die zwart zijn lijk
hun eigen hart: zie ze dragen
al de offerwaren op de eelten
van hun grote handen.

hun goden zijn beulen.
brengers van de stromen,
stormen, donder en bliksem.

maar ook vaders die oogsten
brengen op velden van mais,
van kalabassen, van katoen.

Wie God tracht te begrijpen
is een ketter en ook God-verlaten
goddeloos; wie God wil kennen ook.

De neger tracht geen God
te kennen, te begrijpen.

hij is zo vol, zo vol van God.

de beul en vader.
iets meer vader.

XXII

Afrika is zonder wetten,
zonder banen, zonder banden.
een ieder straft zichzelf,
wanneer het kwaad in hem voorkomt,
door de kwellingen van het kwaad
in zijn geweten en gemoed.

hier groeit het onkruid
veel te snel voor mensenbanden.
de lianen zijn geen banden,
maar de auto's van de apen.

men leeft hier naar de normen
die de Maker in de harten blies.
hier zijn geen mensenrechters
die de wetten moeten maken.

die de wetten moeten maken.

geen rechters die hun leven
wijden aan het doorboren,
breken, verwerpen, tornen
van hun eigen, eigen wetten.

XXIII

De reeën werpen langs de oevers
van Afrika's gele waters.
de lammeren staan op
en baden in de gele waters.

maar ook de negervrouwen
baren hier. het water dat
de reeën-lammeren wast,
verschoont ook mensen.

want de neger scheidt
geen water van een ander water.
de neger scheidt
geen mens ook van een ander mens.

want scheiding is verdeling
en verdeling is weer strijd.

hij laat de dieren bij de mensen.
hij laat de mensen bij de mensen.

neen, de neger wenst geen scheiding.
want scheiding brengt verdeling
en verdeling brengt weer strijd.

XXIV

Hier was de tijd ook machteloos
hij kwam en ging en kwam,
maar nam niet veel en bracht
ook weinig.

hij maakte elders slaven van de heersers
hij maakte elders heersers van de slaven.

toch was hij hier zo machteloos,
want hier draaide de aarde stil.
vloeiden stralen samen
tot een donker middelpunt.

de negers meten tijd
in het staan en vallen
van de ranke kokospalmen.

maar wat brengt een kokospalm
als hij staat?
wat neemt hij anders mee
dan luchten, als hij valt?

ja, hier was de tijd ook machteloos
hij bracht niet veel
en nam ook weinig.

XXV

Spiritual van de gids

Ik heb zo weinig nodig
om te leven, zo telbaar weinig
heb ik nodig om te leven.

maar eer dat weinige dat
telbaar is uit horizonten
tot mij nadert, ben ik
omgevallen als 'n wolkenkrabber.

eer dat weinige dat telbaar is,
uit handen van een wezen
aan mijn handen wordt gegeven,
ben ik een rottende palm in
een diep moeras.

ik heb zo weinig nodig,
om in de wereld die ver-
loren is, te leven.

maar dat weinige zal ik
waarschijnlijk nooit beleven.

ik blijf gids voor anderen,
dat zij zoeken waar ik wijs.

ik zal mijn weinig iets
waarschijnlijk nooit beleven.

XXVI

De Etrusken zijn nu dood
hun geheimen begraven in tomben.
slechts de negers uit het land
der Nubiers van voor Christus, leven.

maar zij verwringen nu
geen dodenmaskers meer.

zij dragen kokosnoten naar de stranden,
waar van slavenschepen nog wrakken drijven.

kokosnoten dragen zij nu naar de stranden.
met balen rubber, diamant en goud.
en maken ook geen maskers meer.

blanken maken nu de maskers.
blanken varen langs de oude
stranden, dringen in de diepste binnenlanden.

de neger maakt geen maskers meer.
heeft zelf al de vormen van zijn maskers,
maar de blanken varen voort.
wanhopig zoeken ze naar maskers.

XXVII

Wie weet zijn de skeletten hier,
van tempels en verwrongen beelden
in hun tijd ook kunst geweest.

wie weet hebben de negers hier,
voor de witte wereld vergeven
werd van decadenties-gif, op
hun manier gevoel gehad.

gevoel en ook beschaving.
zelfs in de zin waarin de blanken
altijd praatten van gevoel
en van beschaving....

waarom zou de witte wereld anders
zich hebben ingescheept naar
de dichte wouden, zoekende,
alsof zij iets verloren hebben?

of wordt nu iedereen wanhopig,
hopeloos, omdat het einde van de
wereld plotseling zo merkbaar nadert?

XXX

Ik leid mijn karaveen maar verder.
deze mensen zoeken iets, ik weet niet wat.

Want de kokospalmen zijn al kaalgeplukt,
de goede en de boze geesten,
reeds in de avondschemering gevlucht.

weldra raken ook de mijnen uitgeput.

de herten komen nu niet meer
aan de open beken drinken.
de leeuwen worden mak
en helpen herten vluchten.

de krokodillen zijn ook weggedoken.
het nijlpaard schuwt het veld,
de olifanten vliegen schielijk weg.

eens kwam de blanke karavaan
en zocht een zwart lichaam.
nu komt de blanke karavaan
en zoekt een geest voor zijn musea.

XXXI

Naar de vrouwen

Stoet die mij volgt
naar de geheimenissen
van dit donker woud;
naar de sluimerende moerassen
en de tere waters;

stoet die meent door
uw schitterende blankheid
licht te werpen op
de duisternis rondom -

stoet die zegt dat liefde
schoon is en verheven.
maar duizendmaal en duizendmaal
op hete liefde trapt -

vat mijn hand en ik leid
u naar de vrouwen.
waar gij blankheid zult
ontdekken en licht.

en licht. en licht van liefde
en liefde. en licht van liefde.

XXXII

O gij die leert van moederschap
en zegt dat dit zo heilig is,
en heilig-zijn en moederschap
vertrapt, bespot.... zie hier
wat moeders zijn, wat heilig is.

borsten zwiepen op tamtamgeluid.
kinderkoppen zuigen leven
uit veel zwarte vruchten.

op de velden staan de vrouwen
eenzaam in de zon.
op de velden staan de vrouwen
eenzaam in de zon.

ruggen eeltig en hard.
maar ruggen zacht voor 't kind.
ruggen eeltig en hard.
hun last is zwaar, maar
de ruggen blijven zacht voor 't kind.

Gij die reist en landen ziet
en kent met mensen groot en klein
Zaagt gij harder ruggen?
Zaagt gij zachter ruggen?

XXXIII

Ik zeg U dat zij liggen
deze vrouwen met hun
eeltige ruggen op doorns
en mannen strelen met
hun even eeltige handen.

Ik wijs U waar zij liggen:
daar op harde stenen,
daar op stekels en op doorns
en ik zeg U dat zij kermen
met de stekels en de doorns.

en daar ontvangen zij
het zaad en het Woord,
en geven leven aan dit
zaad en aan dit Woord.

Hun weeën zijn Uw weeën:
maar zij baren bloemen
orchideeën uit Zaad en Woord,
en alles wat zij baren bloeit.

En gij, wat baart gij
in uw wereld van moorden,
in uw wereld van beschaafde woestenij
war baart gij met elke worp dan haat?

XXXIV

Lailila dans het lied der maan
dans het lied der maagden
dans het lied van onverschrokkenheid,
zwiep met de tamtammen op je borsten
en dans Lailila, dans.

dans de vreugde, dans de somberheid,
dans de bitterheid, dans de doden,
dans de roem van de zwarte keizer,
dans de roem van Kamambouremema.

dans totdat de ochtend gloort,
de dag zich in de nacht weer boort,
de dag de vrijer naar de velden spoort,
dans totdat de jaren tandeloos vergaan.

dans totdat de maan weer schittert
in de zon, zich spiegelt in de glans
van je betraande huid, totdat in trance
en hete dans en lied vergaat 's wereld
woest en ongetemd geluid.
dans Lailila, dans: dans Lailila.... dans.

XXXV

Tantanawa danst haar vreugde:
haar man heeft haar gehuwd,
haar man heeft haar gehuwd,
Tantanawa danst haar vreugde.

Haar man heeft haar gehuwd,
haar man heeft haar 'n maagd bevonden;
als de prille struiken, als ongerepte oorden,
als morgendauw, als onbetreden duister.

Tantanawa danst haar vreugde,
Tantanawa is een maagd bevonden.

Van Casamanca in de Senegal
Tot in Soenda tot in Congo
klinkt nu 't tamtammen van Jacoubo:
Mijn Tantanawa is een maagd bevonden.

Tantanawa danst haar vreugde
Jacoubo zingt zijn vreugde.

Tantanawa is gehuwd en maagd bevonden,
als de prille struiken, als ongerepte oorden.
als morgendauw, als onbetreden duister.

XXXVI

Eens zullen de tamtams
uit alle werelddelen klinken.

Zwarte Engelen zullen nederdalen
en het Woord zal tronen op de morgen.

ik en gij, wij zullen niet meer
reizen; gij zult niet schieten
meer op hen; noch zullen zij
de lansen - die hun eigen lichaam
wonden - meer richten ook op u.

en het Glimlachend Woord
zal zwarte en witte handen houden,
er zal veel vreugde zijn
in witte en zwarte wouden.

eens - maar eens is ver
en eens is lang geleden.

eens is ver en eens is
lang - en lang geleden.

XXXVII

Wij naderen het einde.
het dichte woud ligt achter
en vóór gloort zonlicht
scherp al door bladeren.

gebrul van leeuwen
ligt ver en lawaai
van olifanten klinkt
slechts vaag tot onze oren door.

ook de tamtamgeluiden
blijven achter ons
verzonken in het duister.

voor ons doemt het licht
weer op en negers gaan
hier al gekleed.

de reizigers kijken om
en dralen als in aarzeling.

Is het heimwee naar het woud,
of vreugde van uit het woud te zijn?

XXXIII

Wijsheid van een aap

De wijsheid van mijn vader
is deugdelijk en waardevol:
Als anderen vergaan mijn zoon
grijp je ergens vast en lééf.

Ik breek hier met mijn vader,
de generaties kruisen nu
de blanke sabels en de degens.

want als ik weet dat
anderen vergaan,
zorg ik dat ik dagen
van tevoren ben gesublimeerd.

Mijn vader zou zo schamper
zeggen: Ach mijn zoon zo laf.

want mijn vader weer niet
dat ik vele stervenskreten
en heel veel wanhoop heb aanhoord.

XXXIX

Wijsheid van houtwormen

Het is zo leerzaam om te vallen
zo leerzaam om niet op te staan
om kruipend-liggend als het
Lager ongedierte, wortels te schieten
in de hechte stam van staande bomen.

Het is leerzaam voor wie klein
is om nooit op te staan, omdat
die staat enkel maar kan vallen.

Maar leerzamer om knagend
aan het strakke lijf van hen die
staan, hun broze val na jaren
in nachten voor te bereiden.

maar nier leerzamer
dan de dood, is het blijven
staan en wachten, totdat war wij
ondermijnden valt op ons.
op onze tere hoofden.

XL

Nog aanschouwt ons oog
een blik van het dieper woud:
Nioka zit en tuurt in
een lelie-vol moeras.

een engel waakt met hem
en streelt door de korrels
van zijn kroezig haar.

maar laag-sluipend als
de hagedis, geruisloos
varend in de donzigheid
van gras, waakt aan
d'overkant de dood.

Nioka bouwt zijn werelden
van dapper-zijn en moedig
eervol-sterven.
Nioka wil zo weinig.

maar de dood der geest
in witte steden,
schuifelt nader in 't gras.

alsof vóór zijn geboorte,
voor elke Nioka's geboorte,
zijn geest verkocht is
aan het noodlot van zijn ras.

XLI

Laat de kleinen tot mij komen.
ergens staat dit woord geschreven.
Dit woord van het Woord dat
gij gekruisigd hebt met al uw daden.

laat de kleinen tot mij komen:
en gij die dit woord zo
in duizend talen kent,
en het zelfs leert aan anderen -
het zelfs leerde aan mij -

vraagt nu om te vluchten van Nioka.
gij gaat hem snel voorbij
zoals gij dagelijks schiet
voorbij Het Woord
mijn Woord - Uw woord.

hoe kunt gij mijn stem
beweent uw daad - die dit Woord
zo kent: Laat de kleinen tot mij komen:
zo wreed van vluchten voor
de kinderogen van Nioka dromen?

Hoe kunt gij, die het woord zo kent,
immerdoor de engelen in blanke
kleuren blijven schilderen?

XLII

Ik zei U dat de doem
des noodlot steeds
de negerman vervolgt
en in de binnenlanden
fluisterde ik U toe
van Cham's vervloeking.

dat was een leugen
maar 'n leugen enkel
voor uw zielerust.

en dat hij de gramschap
en de toorn van de Maker draagt.

dat was een leugen
maar een leugen enkel
voor uw zielerust.

want als gij de vloek der wereld
en vervloeking bij deze mensen wist,
dan zoudt gij lichter varen naar
uw witte steden; wellicht U minder
schuldig voelend aan de dood....

XLIII

Gij kunt niet blijven hier
omdat uw hart aan andere
weelde gehecht is al.

mijn leugen was daarom
enkel om uw zielerust:

dat wanneer u op uw
grote goden van de zee
van onze stranden weer,

u lachen zou en klinken
met elkaar om dat ‘uw schuld
in Afrika verborgen is’.

en denken zou dat uw
vloek door de eeuwen
heen steeds wordt gedragen
door de donkere kleur van Afrika.

maar de laatste bomen
van dit woud: ze fluisteren:
herroep de leugen, want die
zijn schuld verwerpt
draagt een groter juk.

XLIV

Want kent gij het verhaal
van Helios de zonnegod
die zetelt hoog op wolkentronen
om wie zich alle eeuwen scharen?

die rond de aarde rijdt
op brullende leeuwen
die licht naar alle kanten briesen?

en wist gij dat voor zijn zoon
de leidsels nam en eens de ronde
reed, ook de negers blanke mensen waren?

wist ge dat de zon de aarde heeft
verschroeid en in dit werelddeel
het kwaad uit de harten heeft gebrand?

wist ge dat negers niet vervloekten zijn;
doch gezurverden, omdat de zon uit hen
het kwaad heeft weggebrand?

XLV

Weet gij nu waarom gij
zo de neger schuwt en
hem uit uw wereld bant....

waarom Amerika hem wil tot slaaf,
hem lyncht wanneer hij slechts
omziet maar naar een vrouw;

zoals Amerika deed met Wil Mac Gee,
toen Amerika de Mississippi schreien deed?

Omdat gij zo hartstochtelijk
het goede haat, het verkoopt
aan verlangens van het kwaad.

en ook omdat gij 't goede vreest,
gij vreest de ogen van het goede,
gij vreest de adem van het goede,
gij vreest betasting door 't goede....

Neen, neen, neen.
gij kunt en durft niet te toeven
hier in Afrika, waar het kwaad
is uitgebrand....

XLVI

Vraag mij ook nier meer
waarom de negers eenzaam zijn.

vraag niet meer waarom
zij voor hun hutten zitten
en turen in het niets.

vraag niet waarom zij zo alleen
zijn in uw drukke steden.
waarom hun strijd zo hopeloos
verloren schijnt....

want zaagt gij ooit
het goede dwalen in een
ander kleed gehuld, dan
in het stille kleed van eenzaamheid?

en gij, die bereisd zijt,
zoveel werelden hebt gezien,
zaagt gij ook een ongelijker
strijd, dan de strijd van goed en kwaad?

XLVII

Het laatste dorp

De oogst was overvloedig
de jacht was overvloedig
de netten waren rijp van vissen:
dit dorp is in feest gehuld.

de krijgers eren met de
vuurdans hun gevallen makkers.
de vrijers huwen maagden:
vannacht komen de jongste negers.

alleen het lied der maagden
wier geliefden niet weer keerden.

het lied van heimwee naar die
niet weer keerden uit de
verre streken overzee....
dit dorp viert feest:
tamtamgeluiden omhullen het.

de oogst was overvloedig
de jacht was overvloedig
de netten waren rijp van vissen
dit dorp is in feest gehuld.

alleen het lied der maagden
wier geliefden niet weer keerden....

XLVIII

Spiritual

Uit baldadig hout ben ik gesneden.
mijn schepper is baldadig.

Gisteren nog ben ik uitgegaan
met woorden om Hem en zijn
schepping hier te treffen.

de woorden als harde stenen
heb ik naar omhoog gesmeten.
maar vandaag vervolgt hun
klaterend vallen op mijn
eigen hoofd mij nog.

niet eens de bladeren
zijn gevallen.
niet eens de bomen
zijn geraakt door al mijn woorden.

niet eens de luchten
niet eens de winden.

ze zwerven boven,
klateren beneden op mijn hoofd
en worden wonden, wonden.

uit baldadig hout ben ik gesneden
mijn schepper is baldadig.

XLIL

Blanke spiritual

Onze laatste hoop is eerlijkheid.
na de tempels die wij bouwden
voor kalven van bedrog van goud.
on met de wanen die wij nu belijden.

onze laatste hoop de eerlijkheid.
onze redding is ook eerlijkheid.

Maar waar zullen wij de krachten
vinden voor de grotten van de waarheid?
waar zullen wij de krachten vinden
om op te staan in eerlijkheid?

onze laatste hoop de eerlijkheid.
onze redding is ook eerlijkheid.

maar waar zullen wij de krachten
vinden om te zeggen: Staak de strijd,
staak de strijd, ik ben de dader.
waar zullen wij die krachten vinden?

L

Zie hoe argeloos toch negers zijn:
duizendmaal vertrapt gij hen in uwe
steden, maar toen gij kwaamt in Afrika
was hun groet aan u zo eerlijk zonder wraak.

en nu gij gaat, willen zij Uw schepen
met hun prauwen begeleiden
en heffen u ren afscheid nogmaals
hun tamboe-geroffel aan.
en noemen u zo kinderlijk hun broeder.

zie hoe argeloos toch negers zijn:
hoe zij u omhangen met hun fetisj.
hoe spontaan zij nu vaarwel
met palmbladeren wuiven.

ze werpen nu geen steen u achterna,
noch schelden vrouwen van wie
de zonen in uw steden sneuvelden
u uit voor moordenaar....

zie hoe argeloos toch negers zijn:
ze hangen u hun fetisj om
zeggen u spontaan vaarwel,
noemen u hun vriend en broeder.

LI

En als het einder u ontnomen
heeft aan hun speurende ogen
zie, ze keren naar hun korven weder.

de hoofdman roept de strijders op.
de maagden komen ijlings van het veld,
en op de paden waar gij stondt,
schaart een heel koraal zich aan.

het tamboe-geroffel roept niet op
ten strijd, maar op tot hete dans:

Lailila dans het lied der maan
Tantanawa dans het lied van vreugde.
Jacoubo dans het lied van dankbaarheid.
Nioka dans het lied van onverschrokkenheid.

en hun goden die door bomen
en uit beddingen van waters gluren
worden zacht en vriendelijk gestemd,
en schenken u behouden vaart.

LII

En met hun dans weerklinken luid
hun zangen, hun spirituals:
Soon it will be done with
the troubles of the world.

hoor d'argeloze bidden voor zijn
broeder, die hem verstoot zodra hij kan.
hoor d'argeloze bidden: dat zijn broeder
spoedig ook geen zorgen meer zal kennen.

want d'argeloze zelf kent geen zorgen,
de argeloze is te argeloos voor zorgen.

en indien zij nog de daad van Kain
gedenken dan trommelen zij hun goden toe:
wil het hun vergeven, wil hun vrede schenken.

wil zelfs hun slechte daden toch vergeven,
geef hun rijkdom, wegen, huizen, geld;
want heersers van het woud: Er zijn zo
weinig Kains die weten wat zij doen.

LIII

Ga in vrede van de stranden
van dit geheimnisvolle land.
Begraaf uw armoede en adem
in herinnering de geur van
al de rijkdom van dit woud.

vaarwel Amerika, vaarwel Europa.
in dit woud heerst slechts vergeving.

vaarwel die hardnekkig blijven
op de verdwaalde wegen, wars
van naastenliefde, broederliefde.
in dit woud heerst slechts vergeving.

vaarwel maar weet dat wijl
gij in uw witte steden vaak
de zwarte man vervolgt,
zijn zusters en zijn moeder
en zijn broeders in het zwarte woud,

hun goden in spirituals
om uw vrede en vergeving smeken.

LIV

De gids

Hoor de stampers
en besnaarde kalabassen,
deze stampers, dit geluid
van honderd voeten, deze kalabassen.

dit tamtam, dit tamtam, o dit tamtam.
o deze stampers, deze stampers,

lang nadat mijn ogen zijn gesloten,
in de rillende dans des doods
zullen deze stampers stampen.

voedsel malen, cassave en mais.
lang nadat mijn ogen zijn gesloten
in de rillende dans des doods
zullen deze stampers stampen.

ik blijf hier, aan dit strand
ik blijf hier, aan dit strand.

stampers stampen
tamtams rammen.
kalabassen klinken
nog in de rilling van mijn dood.

[Nummer 2]

Cola Debrot
Pages from a diary in Geneva
preceded by
My sister the negro

[Inleiding]

Cola Debrot, born 1902 on the island of Bonaire in the Netherlands Antilles, studied law and medicine at the universities of Utrecht and Amsterdam and is at present directer of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Netherlands Antilles.
'Pages from a Diary in Geneva' are excerpts from a diary kept by the author during the 39th Conference of the International Labour Organization in Geneva in 1956. It appeared in the dutch literary monthly 'Tirade' in 1957. 'My sister the Negro' first appeared as a booklet in 1935 with a second edition in 1953. The translations are by Estelle Reed Debrot, American wife of the author. We offer these translations especially for our English speaking compatroits and friends in the Caribbean area.

My sister the negro

The harbour of the Dutch West Indian Islands begins with a long channel that ends in a capricious bay; on the map a stem with a cluster of flowers. The entrance is so wide that large steamers can easily move in it and so long that ships can moor along the quays on both sides.

On an afternoon like countless others in the tropics, a steamer was just entering the harbour; small tugboats hauled on cables that kept striking against the surface of the water, as if invisible giantesses were skipping rope. A young man stood on deck, watching. He thought: everything about life is mysterious. It is even strange that I am called Fritz Ruprecht, which might merely be the two Christian names of another. And that I return to this island where I was born because my parents are dead, and maybe, too, because I've had enough of Europe, where you see far too few negroes. I am glad that I will always be rich now. I'll live with a negress. I'll call her: my sister the negro. I hated those pale faces in Europe, cold as fishes, with their lack of brotherly and sisterly sympathy.

From the quay, where a row of old pointed Dutch gables formed a background, a private launch suddenly darted out towards the large ship and, after a sharp swerve, came to a stand still against the gangway, hardly rocking on the waves. The mulatto, who had been sitting at the rudder, fastened the small vessel with a hook on to the huil of the large ship, near a scupper from which jets of water spouted at rhythmical intervals. Then a small, stout gentleman in grey shantung, with a straw hat, stepped from the motorboat to the ladder, which he climbed slowly. On deck he was greeted by the captain and another gentleman in white linen, wearing a sun helmet.

Ruprecht watched them. They formed a typical group of the tropics: a sun helmet, a straw hat, a sleeve with three or four gold stripes. They talked together like people who are in a hurry, but still want to gossip. On their laughing faces, especially the captain's, crow's feet appeared around the eyes. They bowed to each other. Then the captain turned in the direction of Ruprecht and called in a loud voice, because of the distance: ‘Mr. Ruprecht, these gentlemen would like to speak to you.’

Before Fritz Ruprecht could collect himself, the two tropical men were standing before him. The one in white, who was the younger and whose face showed tiny red veins like the ribs of a leaf, held both hands out to him: ‘You have changed a great deal, naturally, since you were last here, fourteen years ago. I am Dr. Wellen.’

‘I still remember you, doctor.’

The stout gentleman in shantung, whose yellowish-grey face at first repulsed him, because he had grown so unfamiliar with the effects of the tropics, held Ruprecht's hand in his while they talked until their hands became sticky: ‘I am sorry that I cannot look after your physical welfare like our friend Dr. Wellen, nor am I the man for your spiritual welfare...’ With these last words he broke off his sentence, laughed self-consciously and stared in front of him as if he suddenly felt a stab of conscience... ‘but your property is, for the present, still in my hands...’

‘I had imagined you as older, Judge, that is why I did not recognize you immediately.’

‘No, young man, no compliments. I am getting old. Soon I will follow your poor father.’

‘I remember how often you came to our house to play whist,

as a child I could not keep my eyes off the counters. Round and oblong, red and white, green and black.'

'Old memories...'

The judge gripped his forehead between his fingers, gave a short laugh and grasped Fritz by the arm as though he were examining his biceps.

'Let me begin, Fritz Ruprecht, born on May 4, 1902, son of Alexander Ruprecht and Marie Antoinette Clémence Villeneuve, by handing you this bunch of keys, as the town formerly handed over the keys to a victorious general. I have attached those tags to them, something like counters, so you can tell them apart. And I wrote on them where they belong: the house in town, the coach-house which, by the way, will give you a shock, it is badly in need of repairs; the house on the plantation and as you know, a plantation is still called "cunúcu" here. The key for the gate of the cunúcu is also here. In any case, it is all written down precisely. Here, then, are the keys. It is warm on board. I won't make a long speech. I hope you will make the same use of them that your poor father did.'

'I thank you, judge.'

'Of course, you will come along with me now. We will have a little lunch and you can see my wife and Tonia, whom you will not recognize.'

'Yes, she must have become quite a big girl in these fourteen years.'

'Yes, quite a big girl. That is the exact expression for it. Afterwards you may have my auto and Wansitu for to-day. Don't you understand me? Wansitu is my chauffeur.'

'It is very kind of you, judge. I hope you will not mind if I do not accept your offer. I would like to see everything with my own eyes, do everything with my own hands.'

‘What do you mean by that? I am getting old. When people start acting strange I cannot follow them.’

‘I only want to go to the coach-house for the old Ford, you wrote me that it still runs. I want to go to the cunúcu in it. I will find my way. I remember everything precisely, I was sixteen the last time I was here.’

‘I'm sorry. My wife expected you. Besides I thought you would stay at a hotel for the first few days. You would be quite free there and could get rested.’

‘Oh, please do not be offended. It would perhaps be easier for me to be alone these first days.’

‘I understand, I understand, my boy, but at least you must come in my boat.’

The doctor, who had left them for a few minutes, returned and took part in the conversation: ‘Just a little medical formality. You are feeling healthy, Fritz?’

‘Terribly healthy, sometimes I even feel like a brute.’

‘You do not have to be especially healthy for that.’

They laughed. Fritz went away a moment to see about his luggage. He put a few personal things in a brief case and joined the judge again. They descended the ladder slowly. Ruprecht cautioned the older man to be careful.

Above, leaning over the railing, the captain and doctor waved to them. The doctor put his mouth to the captain's ear and whispered, as though telling a risqué story not intended for others to hear: ‘A fine young spendthrift, he cost his father thousand's, it won't take long before the inheritance runs through his fingers like water, too...’ The captain nodded and grinned with his crow's-feet.

At a landing place, where the water splashed up against the low platform in swinging movements, Fritz disembarked.

‘Can I leave you alone, Fritz?’

‘I hope I can take care of myself,’ Fritz answered with a laugh.

‘Yes, of course,’ the judge said, but with his thoughts somewhere else.

‘You look as though you had spent your whole life in Paris. I was there once too, long ago; Folies Bergère, Moulin Rouge, Claridge Hotel.’ And laughing: ‘In Paris one often sees types like you. I do not know exactly what I mean by that myself. In any case, good luck, my boy, and if you need any help, come to us. Then you can see my wife and Tonia who, as you said yourself, has become quite a big girl.’

They shook hands and Fritz took a well-measured step from the boat to the platform. The snow-white launch shot back into the harbour where the stern of the liner could be seen turning, like a huge placard with the name and place of origin printed on it.

Fritz stood all alone on the island where he was born, but which he had not seen in so many years. The first feelings that welled up in him were of pure delight. Though his father was dead and his mother too, these fearful realities did not cause an insurmountable dejection in the young man. They formed that background of melancholy which gives something fatal to life: you reach a half somnambulistic state of drunkenness in which it seems that since nearly everything is lost, nothing is forbidden, and you can indulge in the most bizarre adventures. Fritz Ruprecht would have his bizarre adventure. Those interesting white women of Passy and the winter resorts, of the Hague and Wimbledon! Je m'en fous et je m'en fous pas mal. I want ‘My sister the negro’. No more nonsense. Just blackness and affection.

This gay mood gave way to a decidedly sombre one. He suddenly felt like committing hara-kiri, standing alone on this platform which he would soon have to leave for places where every nook and corner had become crystal-clear again in his mind. There was no salvation to be expected from something which left so little play to the imagination. This island, this distant corner of the earth was still divided in two parts: an eastern and a western part, separated from each other by the harbour deeply indented into the narrow island. One road ran from the harbour to the westpoint and one road from the harbour to the eastpoint. On the eastern as well as the western part, the road was flanked on both sides by plantations varying in size. There was but one difference: the road along the western part was hedged with cacti, the one along the eastern part with agaves. Sometimes at the fall of evening, in the extremely short tropical twilight, you could see a parrot sitting on top of a long, slender cactus stem: motionless, idolatrous, while rose-coloured streaks from the awful, bloodshot, setting sun gave the landscape of bare hills such peculiar colours, that it reminded Fritz not only of the island's western landscape, but also of the evening gown on the of a femme de trente ans, whom he had stood kissing under fragrant chestnut trees, somewhere in Europe...

Such things were difficult to fathom: had he kissed her so deeply because she looked like Sylvia Sydney, whom he only knew from the films, or because she wore an evening gown in the hues that the twilight in the distant landscape took on?

The plantation of the Ruprecht's lay in the western part. He only knew the eastern part because as a child he often had to visit an uncle, an aunt, or at least distant cousins. On the small island all the whites were related either by birth or by

marriage. The negro coachman Pedritu would take him to the uncle, the aunt, or the distant cousin. In his little boy's snit, with knickerbockers, he had sat bobbing up and down for hours next to Pedritu, who told him fairytales about spiders, about princesses who sang in heaven, about the ghost who appears as a white donkey with a blue star between his upstanding ears; the negro wanted to amuse and comfort the little boy who began to complain that his trousers stuck to his buttocks, and to press himself close to the coachman and whisper:

'Pedritu, I feel so afraid here, everything is different here.'

Fritz knew better now: east or west, it was all the same. Only the agaves lent the landscape another character. It was this other character that frightened the small boy. Not the agaves themselves. You could do something pleasantly naughty with agaves. You could take a piece of broken glass or a rusty nail, and carve on the leaves the words that the boys in Europe chalked on fences and public lavatories. You could also lay bare your heart, that most vulnerable of human organs, and tell: I love Lydia or Jane or Carlotta. In a few days a crust would appear and then the words would stand out on the green leaves in clear parchment letters. When the agaves flowered you could see hummingbirds, like large butterflies, fluttering around the blossoms... What name would Fritz Ruprecht carve now if he stood before a fresh green agave leaf with a rusty nail in his hand? Probably he would not know.

Ruprecht could not remain standing there on the platform bemusing himself with memories. He must do something. He walked rapidly down the main street of the town. Once or twice a negro woman would stand still and watch the young man, who moved too swiftly for the tropics; then she would call to some other negro woman, stretched out on a doorstep taking

a siesta: ‘Who is that? Is it a stranger or is that someone from the island?’ When Ruprecht answered in the negro patois, the women became hilarious and jabbered back, shouting with laughter. Ruprecht walked on.

Along the wide street stood the most dissimilar kinds of houses. Large mansions with balconies along the whole width of their gables varied with less ostentatious houses, and with those which might better be called huts. The huts were still the liveliest; inside black women sat on the floor combing and dressing each other's hair; the kinky locks were pulled to their full length with oil; the one who did the pulling took advantage of the opportunity to abuse the other; the one whose hair got pulled answered with a string of curses wherein especially the Virgin Mary figured prominently. The large houses, however, lay completely still with all the jalousies closed. Ruprecht suddenly remembered that a young girl had once stood between two pillars on one of these balconies; somewhat tall and lanky, with rather large feet, but also with clear blue eyes and long blond hair. She stood between the two pillars and laughed as silently and cruelly as only girls of fourteen can. Even now, after so many years, Fritz Ruprecht still felt her laughing at him. Pain flitted through his heart, as once more an old wound was broken open. At that moment he heard the clacking of jalousie slats being let down. Ruprecht looked up quickly. Between the narrow openings he saw part of a human face, that part which is left uncovered by harem women; eyes, the bridge of the nose and a little of the cheeks. Probably a lonely white woman was peering at the stranger whom she could not recognize. What a melancholy thought: ‘A woman of thirty who peers at me now, and a girl of fourteen who laughed at me formerly; it would be absurd and incredible

if, by chance, they happened to be one and the same. However, the chance did not turn out to be such a good one. At that moment he caught sight of a gasoline station, with the yellow Shell pump; there would be no gasoline in the coach house. Good-Year and Dunlop-tyres were hanging there and the little Michelin-man, as everywhere else in the world. And auto parts: headlights, carburators, spark-plugs. The man who came towards Ruprecht was an American in shirt-sleeves, without a tie; a belt held the white linen trousers around his heavy waist and a white oval served him for a face.

'I want two cans of gasoline.'

'You want to take them with you?'

'No. Haven't you a boy?'

The man did not answer, but went outside a moment and called something down the street. Soon a negro was standing there with a wheelbarrow on which the two cans were loaded. Using the native tongue, Ruprecht said to the negro: 'Follow me'. On hearing his own patois, the man flooded Ruprecht with questions about his origin.

'I knew your father well. I often got gasoline for your father too. As a matter of fact, I often did errands for your father. I brought thousands of letters to the post office for your father.'

They both laughed. There had been times when Ruprecht's father, obsessed by heaven knows what kind of fear, had suffered from a mania for writing letters, apart from those which formed his business correspondence.

This laughter brought the conversation to a close. Ruprecht gave no more answers. The rolling of the one small wheel could be heard; the two cans rattled as they collided.

Finally Ruprecht turned into a narrow street of huts, where a sweetish smell of bananas hung in the air. The women sat

on stools against the huts. They shouted their questions at the negro who, rather under the impression of Ruprecht's silence, only gave timid answers. Their curiosity was satisfied, however, for the women called in loud voices; the young master has come back, the young master has come back. He had a special significance for these negroes; he was the landlord of the neighbourhood.

The small street ended where the estate of the Ruprecht's began. The large house itself stood somewhat aside, it was a square building with a pyramidal roof; a wing had been added to one side covered by a half-saddle roof at the height of the first storey. This square white house with the closed jalousies, on which the light green paint was blistering, looked like a mausoleum; not for anything in the world would Fritz Ruprecht have opened it. He felt that his dead patents lay here rather than in the cemetary, which he would pass at full speed: the Ford could surely do 60 kilometres; his parents lay together in the closed house, with their wide-open eyes staring at the ceiling. For the present he would not enter it.

From the large gate, where the sweetish smelling street ended, small paths led, between agaves and anglos (the buttercups of the tropics), to the different parts of the estate; the house; the bleaching field beyond it; the coach-house nearer by; the small house that stood apart, where the old seamstress lived who, notwithstanding the ever prevailing drought, grew flowers: velvet dahlias, roses that were fragrant, and camelias, to be admired especially by the eye. Besides the agaves and little yellow anglos on the ground, red clusters could be seen flowering on the Spanish Karawara. Near the house a large tamarind wove its top in the sky; underneath by the trunk of the heavy tree Ruprecht could see big black spots; these were

the stains of dried blood from the scores of sheep and goats that Pedritu had slaughtered in the course of time. Ruprecht remembered as if it were yesterday the short, violent convulsions of the animal as the neck artery spurted empty; with one stroke of the keen knife, which was first sharpened at length on a whet-stone, the animal's life was taken... Blood... this life is of blood... A tamarind broke loose from a twig and fell silently to the ground; the only sound that Ruprecht heard was the squeaking of the one wheel on the wheelbarrow. He stood before the coach-house. After a short pressure with his key in the yale lock, he could open the doors to both sides, like the leaves of a very heavy book. The silent negro, scratching his head from time to time, helped him. The judge was right; the coach-house was frightfully dilapidated, his father must have neglected it for years; even from outside you could see that the planks, which had never been painted a second time, were mouldering. From the open door, he looked at the back of the old Ford; he could see the number plainly, specks of dried mud and, through the back window, the steering wheel and the dash board... To one side of the car, against the wall, a plank rested on two stone blocks; Pedritu had slept there in the time of the tilbury... Greasy playing cards lay on the ground, red diamonds and black spades, recalling, like the judge's counters, the excitement of long forgotten games. From a beam in the ceiling also hung a harness, from the time of the carriages. Ruprecht started slightly; there against the wall he saw three rustly gasoline cans. With a tap from the toe of his shoe, he discovered they were not empty. This was the gasoline his father had not used up because he had died.

The tank was filled with the gasoline he had brought with him. A few minutes later he sat behind the steering wheel on

the country road. On both sides were cacti. A blazing, barren landscape. The few trees on the slopes and crests of the hills were distorted by the northeast trade wind, blowing from time immemorial in the same direction, always in the same direction...

After several kilometres, larger or smaller coconut groves began to appear in the landscape, their fronds swaying. Then the cactus hedge would temporarily give place to a white-washed wall and a white plantation house would loom up on one of the hills. It was at such a house, that after a couple of hours, he would end his journey behind the steering wheel, which he constantly jerked from left to right because of the bumpy road. Groups of negro girls, carrying their trays and baskets of fish, melons and fruits to the town, darted to the side of the road and pressed themselves against the hedge as the car approached. He could see them coming in the distance; they carried the wares on their heads, hands supporting their swaying hips. As the auto drew near, they grabbed at their heads and started to run, laughing like fleeing black nymphs. The dust raised by the car screened them from view. In the mirror, where he tried to catch a last glimpse of the girls, he saw nothing but the yellow-red dust that disappeared slowly, like smoke after a shot.

Fritz Ruprecht put on the brakes, stopped the car and got out. He had come to a spot where the road widened into a kind of village square, with a small white church covered by a sadle roof bearing a white stone cross on its ridge; in these poor surroundings, it looked much too conspicuous. Nearly as conspicuous as the policeman in white trousers, blue coat and a blue linen helmet, on which the arms of the House of Orange with the words: ‘Je maintiendrai’ stood out in

shining copper. With his club in one hand, the policeman stood before the only normal house in the village. Small negro boys gathered around the Ford, crowding one another to get a look inside at the dash board. Farther on, near the brown loam huts with thatched roofs, stood a donkey tied to a pole in the ground, his head hanging low; one of his ears and the hide of one of his legs quivered from time to time.

Fritz Ruprecht walked up to the policeman.

'Is the district chief in?'

The policeman touched his helmet.

'Yes, shall I announce you?'

'That won't be necessary, I'll do it myself.'

Fritz Ruprecht walked to the front door of the house before which the policeman stood. From the custom acquired in Europe, he first looked for a bell, but then knocked on the panel with his knuckles. A negro woman opened the door. Ruprecht called over her shoulder:

'Are you home, Karl?'

'Who is there?' came from the distance.

'I am, Karl... Fritz Ruprecht.'

'Come along, fellow, come along.'

Following the voice, Ruprecht walked through the house; his steps sounded hollow in the emptiness of the rooms which, as often happens in the tropics, were draped rather than furnished. For the rest, oddly enough, this house was not very different from any house in the Hague where he might ring the bell; probably a caprice of the government builder who could not get his fatherland out of his thoughts. Finally Ruprecht went through the back door into a small yard where most of the space was used for drying clothes. Some damp pieces were stretched out on the ground, held in place by heavy

stones. The voice called: ‘Here I am’. The man whom he called Karl, sat in a garden house, a small wooden shed with one side left open, so that he could be seen sitting there as a painter would portray someone in a room. He sat in a wicker chair with a flabby book in his hand; on a wicker table stood a green bottle and a couple of chipped glasses. Next to them were some open coconuts.

‘Wel, I'll be... it's you Fritz. Sit down. Do you want some rum and coconut milk? That's something even for a European not to turn down. It must be quite a life there in Europe. At least, to enjoy yourself, but not to hear someone else babbling about. So you'd better down your rum and coconut milk and be off. There's not much news here.’

‘I didn't come to tell you any news either. I only wanted to see you. I suddenly remembered that my father wrote me four years ago that you had become the district chief here. A district chief is something like a sheriff in America isn't it?’

‘Listen here, Fritz. I don't mind you showing up unexpectedly, without any warning. As a matter of fact I heard from the judge that you'd be coming this year. But why come floating in like a ghost?’

‘Karl, I hope you haven't become afraid of ghosts during these years... Do you still remember how we used to go hunting together? For rabbits, pigeons, wild ducks, parrots, parakeets...’

‘I have enough time to remember everything, I haven't rambled all around Europe. That's why I say: remain a ghost. Don't bother about the years we haven't seen one another. Nothing is so boring and disgusting to me as people who tell about their lives.’

‘Come cheer up, Karl, or the white devil, as the negroes

used to call you. Pour me the rum and coconut milk. I won't burden you with fourteen years of Europe. Besides, I think that you greatly overestimate that continent.'

'But, you'll have to admit that anything good that could be said about this piece of earth I live on would, to put it mildly, also be overestimating.'

'I don't know, perhaps I am somewhat irresponsible, but two months ago I felt so miserable in some place or ether in Europe, that I suddenly packed all my bags and cried out: here I sleep in the arms of fishes, their fin arms smack mockingly against my body, I want a negress... Besides, now that my parents are dead and I have no one why shouldn't I lead a deliberately mad existence.'

'Finish your drink, Fritz, I'll pour you another, perhaps you've missed this sometimes in Europe too: rum and coconut milk. You're wound up. No one will keep you from having a negress here. As far as I'm concerned, three negresses. I only have two myself. Screaming about it the way you do, though, shows that it goes deeper. Speaking about deep...' Karl broke off his sentence. He pushed his elbows across the table so close to Fritz that the latter looked at him with some surprise.

'Naturally, you think that this book I am reading here, is a kind of detective novel that I kill time with in the jungle, a Wallace or an Ellery Queen, and that I am also a slave to alcohol. It is not a detective novel. It is Shakespeare. I had not yet read Othello.'

Ruprecht's eyes opened wide. He did not at once understand what Karl had said, even thought he misunderstood. And still less did he understand the hard look on Karl's face and the sudden change in the tone that he had used till now.

'What's that, Karl? Forgive me, I have hallucinations

recently and sometimes hear meaningless words and voices.'

With his faded blue eyes, Karl looked him straight in the face, his lips parted slowly and slowly came together again 'Othello of Shakespeare'.

Fritz' face filled with amazement. That Karl read Shakespeare on this forlorn village square was in itself astonishing, but what astonished him still more was the tone in which this declaration was made, a tone that lingered between wilfullness and enmity; not a trace was left of the voice which in the beginning, though indifferent, had not sounded unfriendly. Fritz would like to have cried once more: Come, cheer up, but this time the hearty words died on his lips. He remained looking at the district chief. A smile spread slowly over the red face, cold and at the same time self-satisfied. It was absurd to suppose that Karl wanted to insult him. Nevertheless Fritz stood up, pushing back his chair. He stood there before Karl who remained sitting; Karl, who had once been his friend, but who now behaved in an incomprehensibly equivocal manner. Perhaps the horrors of life finally made every one half irresponsible: hesitating, Ruprecht held out his hand, as if he were greeting a former friend for the last time. Karl lay his hand, like a dead bird, in that of Fritz; at the same time he turned his face away, not because he could not stand the look of the other, but as though he did not consider him worth another glance. Fritz walked slowly through the empty house; step after step echoed with a sound that seemed to exist in itself, apart from Fritz. Outside the policeman touched his helmet. Still pondering on the incomprehensible conversation, he turned the awkward crank. Puffing out a cloud of smoke from behind, the Ford disappeared followed by the eyes of the little negro boys with their poverty-swollen bellies.

After the district chief heard the door close behind Ruprecht, he remained staring vacantly for awhile. Then he suddenly burst into laughter. All by himself in the little garden house, he slapped his thighs with pleasure. He poured himself another rum and coconut milk and reached for his flabby book: not Othello by the great English poet, but a detective story by Wallace, in which a guileful Chinese who had studied at Oxford, tries to abduct a Britannic girl. He closed the book again however and put it back on the table. Yawning and stretching himself, he shouted a few words in the native language which sounded exceptionally crude in the mouth of this white man whose red face was blotchy like those of alcoholics often are. The words were loudly repeated by a negro woman's voice in the house, as in Africa messages are sent on by a telegraph of living people. Immediately afterward the policeman stood before the garden house.

'Listen Tonchi,' the district chief began, 'we haven't had anything to do in a long time. We'll have to go out to night, if only for the variety. We could post ourselves near the country house of Mr. Ruprecht who was just here. Yes, that was Mr. Ruprecht. Nothing will happen though, for he was always a big boaster. I just took him in nicely. Tonchi, never read Othello of Shakespeare! Our fine gentleman has nothing to do, he lets everything go because he wants a negress. Now, you and I have nothing else but negresses but we don't make such a fuss about dirt. Let him have his negress. His Othella. Perhaps we'll have a laugh to night.

The grey-black face of the negro policeman with its mongolian cheek bones grinned. It pleased him to hear one white man degrading another; for his benefit, justice drove a wedge between the people who considered him inferior. He

made some rapid gesticulations, uttered rapid words that sounded loud and bird-like, with which he only indicated that he would be very glad to go out with the district chief and that he would advise the district chief to climb over the fence of the plantation at a certain spot and follow a certain road to the house where they could easily hide in the dark. Picturesque names of paths, woods and hills, flew from his mobile mouth. Sharp gesticulations of his hands in the air connected and combined these words into a strategic plan.

'Upon my word,' interrupted the district chief, 'you really do look Chinese. Do you know who your father was? Yes? Well every time I hear it I'm surprised all over again that he wasn't Chinese. You look like a black Chinaman.'

The policeman guffawed. The district chief's face however remained motionless. Then the policeman saw the quiet smile spread over the red face which he always took as a sign to leave.

Evening had already begun to fall when Fritz Ruprecht fumbled with the padlock on the wooden gare of the plantation 'Miraflores'. Behind him the Ford seemed to be lifted into space by the vague colors of the approaching dusk. The hilly landscape with its sparse, distorted trees was covered by the green transparent veil of twilight which would soon be condensed into black night.

It was the old negro caretaker who came to see what the fumbling with the padlock was. He stood just in front of Fritz, on the other side of the gate. Fritz felt irritated with the old man who did not recognize him at once, but seemed to look straight through him with blank eyes that stared into the distance. The blackness of his face stood out in sharp contrast

to the whiteness of his shirt, like black sealing-wax on a white envelope; he still wore a tight fitting apron over his trousers. His kinky grey hair was so wooly, it looked as if the wind could blow it away.

'Don't you recognize me, Wancho? I am Fritz Ruprecht.'

'Mister Fritz!'

The padlock unclasped, the two doors of the gate swung backwards, while the old negro talked and apologized.

'Forgive old Wancho, he is getting old, his eyes are getting weak and Mister Fritz comes so unexpectedly at the fall of evening.'

'Naturally, the judge could not tell you much, either.'

'No, only that you would come before the year was over.'

Fritz sat again behind the wheel. But he did not push down the starter at once. He looked sadly around him. With bowed head, Wancho stood to the side of the gate, the heavy iron padlock in his thin, old negro hands. Further, not a trace of a human being. For a moment Fritz too bowed his head and looked at the steering wheel where the varnish was worn off on the sides by the hands of his father, and of a chauffeur he had not known. Then his eyes followed the line of the landscape again. Chalky white, like a shriek in the transparent green evening, the white-washed walls stretched out, raised endlessly by the slaves at times when there was no other work to be done; when there was no lime or charcoal to be burned, no coconuts to be clambered for in the high tree-tops, when the cattle needed no tending, the irrigation works no care... All were white-washed: the walls that began on either side of the gate, the walls on both sides of the driveway.

Near the entrance stood the gables of the former slave houses like large white posters from which the perishable

words had been washed away by streaming rain. In the distance, on top of the hill, he saw the plantation house dimly reflected on the wide stone terrace. From here its whiteness and the shape of the roof made him think of a vast tent, left behind by people, who had travelled farther in baste. With its white canvas sides it could heave in rough weather like the pinions of an immense bird.

Fritz pushed down the starter, with a jerk the car shot up the driveway. The caretaker closed the gates behind him. He only vaguely remembered the way to the garage, a former stable; he knew in which direction it was but seemed to have forgotten just where it stood. Now he noted that in fourteen years certain things can reach a state of oblivion. It was silly to be offended because Wancho did not recognize him at once; without the help of the captain probably the judge would not have welcomed him so heartily either. Fritz drove slowly, feeling his way with the front wheels. Wancho was already standing with the doors wide open when he reached the garage.

'You had better go to the house and tell that I've arrived. I'll close the doors myself, I have the judge's keys.'

He remained listening to the last jolts of the dying motor and then got out. Reluctantly. With the door of the car closed behind him, he had the feeling that he was going towards an uncertain future, now that he was about to enter the house again where he had lived many years ago with his mother and father. They had urged him again and again to come back and see the island where he had spent his youth... Then, many years ago his mother had died and a few months ago, his father too... Absently, he remained leaning against the car with one foot on the running board... His mother... His father... Sometimes they appeared in his mind's eye so distinct,

so alive, that it frightened him. Sometimes they were only ideas, names. He wondered why he had come here like this on the very first day. He wondered if he should stay here for the night. He could go back to the town now and stay at a hotel as the judge had advised him to do. Then, from one of the balconies, he could look out on the harbour where the lights from the port-holes fell sparkling across the water. He could even stay on board one more night, in the familiar cabin.

He closed the garage slowly. Outside utter darkness reigned now. Slowly, he continued up the driveway, but when he reached the steps that led to the terrace, he wanted to turn around and run away. Deep within him cried an old, nearly dead voice: in the dark your mother is sitting on the terrace in a rocking-chair... you do not see her... the sound of rocking and your mother's scent guide you... then you bump against the rocking-chair... you touch your mother's dress... you feel the lace collar around her neck... your mother gives you her hand... you play with the hand... you turn the one ring that was not, and the other one that was her wedding ring...

Poignant was the remembrance of this hand which he had formerly played with in the dark and which he had sometimes brought to his lips to bite one of the fingers, with a strange kind of playfulness. He relived it again in his memory: his mother laughed happily, but pulled back her hand. Then the child pressed his face against his mother's who pressed hers back against his. And at the same time, also out of a kind of playfulness but which was mixed with an excess of tenderness, they both made a humming sound, deep in the breast, with teeth clenched.

This was long ago, however. Now he walked across an empty terrace. He would not bump against a chair again in which a

young woman sat rocking alone. And this gave him a feeling of immense, almost nauseating emptiness; as if he were plunged from void into void.

Light was shining from the house. Old Wancho stood in the doorway and looked at Fritz with his blank eyes that stared into the distance. The man remained staring at him. Ruprecht looked back frowningly. It was the second time that Wancho aroused his irritation. Then the caretaker turned with a bow, 'good night, Mister Fritz'.

What did the man want? Probably he was old. While Fritz stood there, lost in thought, he heard a skirt rustle by, heard a woman greet him with the official phrase: 'Welcome to Miraflores, Mister Fritz. I will get you something to eat.' 'Very well,' Ruprecht had answered, staring after Wancho until the old negro disappeared completely in the dark. Then he entered the house... It was as if high flood gates were opened. Reality and memory poured over him, each struggling for ascendancy. First, his thoughts carried him to the garret which, as a child, he used to reach by clambering up a ladder and clumsily pushing open a trap door with head and hands... A tangle of rafters and tie beams. Swarms of bats hung there by their paws, heads down. Motionless. But they began to swing slowly as soon as steps could be heard thumping on the floor. Ghost-like the animals swung, like flocks of black cotton.

Then a view of the interior of the house startled him. He had lived with delusions during all those years in Europe. The division of the house had nearly nothing in common with the intricate, half obscure images he had created for himself at those countless times when he could not fall asleep, half sitting up in bed with his arms around his knees and staring into the dark, or during the day, stretched out in a sunny wood with a

handkerchief over his face and gnats buzzing in his ears. The same two inner walls, which were now simplicity itself, had appeared to him then as something mysterious. They ran parallel to the width of the house, dividing the space into a narrow fore part, a narrow rear part and a broader middle section. The middle section was then sub-divided into three parts: his parents' bedroom to the left, the room in which he used to sleep to the right, and a living room in the middle. The mysteriousness was heightened by the arched openings in the walls that separated the living room from the fore and rear parts. The light could fall through these arches as in an old, deserted church. The pillars that supported them rested on a thick, knee-length wall, so that the small boy could easily clamber under the arches to read his children's books. Fritz rubbed his hand across his eyes in an effort to drive away the images which still tried to sway him. The varying light under the arcades had shaped that deceptive labyrinth in his imagination, which had gradually supplanted reality.

He stood lingering before the passage from the front of the house to the living room. Something kept him from entering. The luster, spread unevenly across the cement floor, as light across an animal's hide, shone almost intensely near this passage which, in his imagination, had become something like the portal which separates two worlds. Would not the life of the architecture, for the most part, also have disappeared, together with the human faces, whose expressions changed as capriciously as the light in the arches of the arcades? In the living room it had always been his father and mother or white relatives that he saw. In the narrow fore and rear part of the house, the slight smell of colored people always hung in the air. A smell he had often missed in Europe. That of the house-

keeper, the caretaker, or of other colored people who came to speak to his father. At such times his father would remain standing at the door talking to them or would take them to the room at one corner of the house.

The corners at the fore and rear parts had been partitioned off, making rooms for various purposes. Thus the kitchen had sprung up at the left front corner, where smoke streaks looked like continents and where negro women were sometimes bustling about and sometimes lying sound asleep on mats. The rear corners had become the bathroom and the former bedroom of the housekeeper. When those rooms were locked, as a child, he had imagined all kinds of things happening behind the thin door panels on which he had even beat with his fists at times. The other room at the front was where his father had done his correspondence when he was on the plantation. This room had left a deep impression on him. Probably the full-rigged three master in a bottle would still be hanging there. And the typewriter which had given him such a fright would still be standing there; he had pushed down one of the keys and the machine shot like an arrow from one end to the other, with a hard bang. It would be standing there in its cover as in a shroud. - In Holland, when a relative had asked him if he did not wear a mourning band, he had felt nauseated. - In his father's study, still leaning against the wall in a corner, would also be the guns with which he used to go hunting with Karl, who was now district chief and who bore ill will against him; why, he could not possibly guess.

But it was not only the district chief, the whole island bore him an ill will. He had returned to his native land with empty hands. That is why he had to wander along empty roads and through empty rooms and past people whose hearts remained

empty for him. He could better have avoided the roads, the rooms and the people, as he had the house in town. That is why he hesitated on the shining cement floor in the passage way, he would rather not enter the living room. A great fear mastered him when a power, stronger than himself, drove him inside. The lighting from the very dim oil lamps in the fore and rear parts, and from the stronger hanging lamp in the living room, was spread out across the floor and walls in circles of various sizes, convolute or intersecting each other; and the segments of stronger and weaker light, together with the shadows cast in the arches of the arcades, formed an immense corolla of light. It seemed to Fritz that he stepped into this corolla and, at the same time, into an ambush, into something insubstantial, a vacuum in space. His eyes sought a fixed point in this vacuum and fastened on the door of the room to his left. There his parents had slept formerly. He used to run in there in the early morning and look at himself in his mother's mirror and go and lie down next to his mother; then his father would already be our ranging the plantation, sometimes on the shy sorrel called Boulanger, and sometimes on foot with hatchet in hand, to chop away the cacti and lianas... ‘Behind that door my parents are still sleeping, my father, my mother,’ called a voice loudly within him. The voice also resounded outside him. Ruprecht was hardly aware of what he did. He sprang towards the door and threw it open. He saw light reflected in his mother's mirror. At the same moment, it was as if someone or something with glowing eyes sprang back at him out of the darkness, gripped him by the shoulders and screamed in his ears. Deathly pale, he slammed the door closed again. He broke into a cold sweat. Everything seemed charged with electricity: he got a shock from everything he came into contact with. But

he controlled himself. This went too far. He must really be in a somewhat irrational state, he was over-wrought. He would have to put bizarre adventures out of his head; the most important thing was to become calm. A person must withstand his emotional excesses.

It was only to assume a feeling of safety that he sauntered so carelessly to the rear of the house. The knob turned, creaking in his grip. The door swept from his hand, like a rag in a whirl wind; the back door was on the north side, where the full North-east trade wind blew... For a moment Fritz felt as if he were being assailed by the wind. Then he grew accustomed to it and let the cool breeze blow through his hair.

He looked into an impenetrable darkness. Gradually his eyes also grew accustomed to this. But it was so dark that objects could not be distinguished save by a greater or lesser degree of blackness or by their sounds. Only far in the distance did he see some drifting paths of light on the sea, between the high dark arms of the rocky coast. The North coast of the island was so inaccessable that the small bay, which he saw from here had, in former times, only served as a play ground for Fritz and his white and coloured playmates. Among them was Karl, who went hunting with him in later years and who today gave him a hand like a dead bird. Also among them was the little cousin whom he had painfully remembered that afternoon in town; she had stood between the pillars, with her lanky body and rather large feet, but also with her clear blue eyes and golden hair, and laughed at him. When, still younger, they had played games on the plantation she also made fun of him. All the games invented by Karl, with his faded blue, forget-me-not eyes, she had found wonderful. She even curled her lips scornfully at the lovely shells, with the rose-colored insides,

that Fritz found on the beach by the little bay, while she tossed back the hair that had blown in her face with a sharp gesture. No, she had not been very fond of him. Over there they had also played. There, where the coconut and date fronds rustled. A single flash of light, heaven knew from what century-far star, struck the metal leaves. The rustling of the sea mingled with the rustling of the palms only to detach itself again, so that the two motives could also be heard distinctly... The rustling music awakened in him the memory of another little girl... A feeling of gratitude arose in Fritz Ruprecht's heart for the little negro friend Maria, who had taken his side against the cousin and who, in her turn had found all of Karl's games very tiresome, preferring even the simplest ones of Fritz.

In the garden, where the coconut and date palms rose above the clustering groups of mango and medlar trees, moss-grown stone benches stood here and there; made in the time of slavery for no other purpose than to enable the various Elizabeths, Virginias, and Carolinas to listen to the rustling of the palm groves: the rhythmical scraping of the fronds against each other, the periods of breathless silence, the distant snapping of a twig. Then the little boy, Fritz, had made up the game of clambering onto the old stone benches and just sitting there next to one another. The cousin, naturally, could not have found it sillier, and ran off with Karl. Fritz sat there with Maria and they counted how often they could hear the wood pigeons coo in the distance. A fervent cooing, deep in the breast.

Fritz remembered this young black girl vividly. She was of a blackness that is seldom seen among the rather mixed negroes of the island. But there was something very unusual about her: the shape of her head, her nose and her lips were like those

of a white person, they had nothing negroid. Even her movements were typical of a white person, with something angular and brittle about the joints, something quattrocento in her manner, which is not seen among the suppler negroes and which, in whites, can degenerate into woodenness. Maria did not make the impression of a mulatto, but of a full-blood negro in whom, however, certain definite features of a distant, non-negroid forefather were pronounced. Later, when he was wandering about Europe, Ruprecht had felt a desire to inquire about this little playmate of his youth. Gradually, the news he received of her formed a coherent story which, however, he had forgotten again years ago. She was the child of the caretaker's oldest daughter. The mother had not survived her birth, and her father had taken little notice of her afterwards.

He was one of those men who could at once be described as ‘unreliable’. He was called Theodore. Like Fritz Ruprecht, he had also gone astray in Europe. Ruprecht had run across him as a waiter at a smart restaurant in the Hague, and then again as a porter in one of those places in Paris where Fritz went chiefly to watch Lesbian women dancing together, with such painful expressions that they looked like drowning people who had just been pulled out of the water. That was the father, Theodore. The daughter Maria, with the help of Ruprecht's parents, had studied at the Normal school, in the only town on the island, to become a teacher of primary classes. This qualified her to stand day after day, with her somewhat astonished eyes, before the poor negro children who, with their arms folded carefully in front of them, repeated the monotonous lessons in a chorus: ab, bc, cd... three four five, one two three. That afternoon in town, the echo of these sounds was carried to him as he passed one of the buildings, but he had

hardly noticed it then. Perhaps she was the one who was directing it. In any case he decided to look her up before he boarded a boat and left the island again. For despite all his expectations of bizarre adventures, he knew that he would not remain there long and that his short stay would be spent on talks with the old judge. He took a few steps backward until his heels touched the door sill. Musing, he had sauntered outside.

With the narrow door sill between his sole and heel, he rocked back and forth. A smile passed over his face; he was not in the least happy, but he felt as if he had been embosomed in a sphere of good will. Before him lay the darkness, which he had filled with tender images from his childhood. Behind him, in the living room, he heard the clinking of knives and forks, the clatter of plates being put on the table. It was the housekeeper who was setting the table for him.

'How dark it is to-night; in Europe they think we only have clear moon and starlit nights in the tropics.'

The housekeeper made no reply.

'When does the moon rise?'

'There is no moon to-night,' she answered with such a clear voice that he felt tempted to turn and see the woman who possessed it. But he did not turn around. He wanted to stand as he was awhile longer, rocking back and forth with the narrow door sill between his sole and heel, the light from the hanging lamp behind him, the clinking of silverware and clatter of dishes, the shuffling of the woman's sandals across the cement floor.

It gave him a safe, almost caressing feeling, to have the housekeeper continually moving about him; like a cat that is hardly noticed, but of whose presence one is constantly aware.

He was glad that he had not turned around; it was exactly right that way: to know she was there without having looked at her. The housekeeper, a slender negress, was bending over the table, under the hanging lamp, from which the rays of light seemed to shine with increased intensity because of the white table cloth. Carefully, she arranged something on the table. When it was finished she picked up the tray on which she had brought in the dishes and food, and walked slowly past the arcade to the kitchen where she laid the empty tray on the table. As she left the room, she looked out of the corner of her eye at Fritz Ruprecht who was still standing with his back towards her. In the kitchen she blew up the fire in the charcoal brazier, sat down at the table, and rubbed her fingers across her forehead reflectively. Then she got up, lit the lantern and went outside. Her skirt, which just reached the knees, flapped in the wind. She crossed the terrace and walked slowly around it in the dark. The lantern swung softly, like an incense burner. Now and then the light fell on a cactus stem that suddenly flashed out of the dark and rose towards the sky. In the shrubs the lizards were startled awake and fled, rustling across the leaves. The light swayed over the bare earth, where even the tiniest stone cast a shadow. At a thickly grown piece of ground, which was in sharp contrast to its surroundings, she put down the lantern and squatted on her heels. Patches of light and dark relieved each other among the leaves and sterns. The woman's body was also touched only fragmentarily by the light: her neck, her face, her legs. A single ray of light struck the toe of one of her sandals. She watched a snail wobble over some clods of earth. On a heart-shaped leaf, a caterpillar was disturbed by the changing light and raised half its little body in the air. A bud sprang out of the dark, separated from its

stem, that only caught the light again where it emerged from the ground. The woman groped with both hands among the leaves and tendrils of the melons, pulled and twisted one loose, her lips pressed resolutely together with the effort.

In the meantime Fritz Ruprecht sat at the table, with a laugh on his face. A contented, indifferent laugh, since the chewing of his food had brought him back to reality and to a skeptical attitude towards the stories with which people try to deceive each other. He had been told that Maria was Theodore's daughter. That might be so. But it might also be otherwise. He stopped eating, laid down his knife and fork. With his jaws clenched and his eyes squinting slyly, he continued the malicious train of his thoughts. He too was from this island, he knew its customs, he saw through its fabrications. Therefore it would not surprise him if one day or another he would be obliged to decide on the fatherhood, not of the roving Theodore, but of Alexander Ruprecht, his own father. Fritz knew that men like Theodore, who were destined to end in European bars, were often chosen to cover the sins of white gentlemen. One thing, however, always betrayed these white trespassers; they gave their secret children an education, making both the children and themselves suspicious in the eyes of others. What betrays a person the most, is always his own heart, with its few irresistable impulses.

Fritz turned his head. He had heard the shuffling of the sandals in the back of the house. He would have liked to speak to someone but she had already disappeared into the room at the right, where she probably slept, Fritz laughed and repeated to himself insinuatingly, almost obscenely: ‘Where she probably sleeps’. He continued, half aloud, raising his index finger and shaking it at an imaginary person opposite him: ‘Yes daddy,

my daddy, how do I know everything you have been doing. Perhaps, here on the plantation, we are all children of Thine, O Father, which art in heaven'. Then at once his face became clouded, the impropriety of the remark and above all the gaiety of the voice penetrated him, as though coming from another. He continued his meal, as still as a mouse, rebuked by his own childish conscience. He wiped his lips and crumpled the napkin. Then he stood up. From the chair next to him he picked up the brief case containing his necessities. He went into the room where he had formerly slept, to the right of the living room, opposite the door he had closed because glowing eyes had rushed at him. He left the door open until he found an oil lamp with a copper reflector, on a table. He fidgeted with the lamp, lit the wick, and closed the glass chimney over it again. There were no windows in the room, but a second door that opened onto the terrace. There was a camp bed. He remembered how often, in Europe, he had longed to sleep on such a bed, especially because no blankets were used, only two thin sheets. On the wall hung a framed reproduction, that he also remembered, it showed a very young girl, kneeling in her night-gown, praying with folded hands. Pre-Raphaelite. He came across the original once, in the Tate or National Gallery, he thought it was the Tate Gallery. He had remained standing in front of it for a long time, because it looked like a copy of the reproduction on the distant plantation, just as the face, which he now examined in the round mirror above the table, looked like a crumpled copy of his childhood face. He remembered that he always had to let his hair be cut quite short, because the merest suggestion of long hair was looked upon by his father as something impossibly untidy. The hair grew into a tuft in the middle that fell into a lock on his forehead, a miniature

Napoleon lock, that he had always found ridiculous. He pulled the drawer of the table brusquely open. All kinds of shells lay in it. He remembered that his father, who took pleasure in few things, was at times enchanted by the shells:

'Give this one to your father, Fritz.'

Would the shells he had given his father still exist? If so, they must be in one of the drawers of his father's desk. He would go and find out at once. He walked hastily out of his room. He had already pulled open the door. He wanted to see the full-rigged three master in a bottle; the typewriter in its shroud; the guns and the revolvers; it was also from that room, that in his father's absence, he had climbed via ladder and trap door to see the bats, swinging like flocks of black cotton. The memory of the ghost-like animals could not frighten him now, as he wandered through his parental house, feeling as safe as when he was a small boy, running from room to room in a moment of excitement. The door knob, on which he felt the old dents, was familiar in his grasp. He had already walked half-way through the living room, had already turned towards the passage to the front part of the house, when he involuntarily stood still.

In the farthest arch, near the kitchen, he had seen: the face of Maria. The shock sent the blood rushing through his body. His fingers tingled, were almost painful. He stood there like a dummy, with both hands stretched before him, his face and eyes frozen with astonishment. Gradually the shock subsided, he heard the ticking of the mahogony grandfather-clock, which hung in the back of the house, though this was the first time the sound had reached him that evening. The calm atmosphere of the living room, lighted by the oil lamp, flowed gratefully through him. It is remarkable, how the aspect of things can

change according to our mood. The same room, which in the beginning of the evening had disquieted him with its corolla of light, into which he had plunged as into a vacuum, now reassured him with the shelter of its rustic lighting. It had been a long time since Ruprecht had stood in this tranquil light. He looked up at the oil lamp. He looked, as if for the first time, at the small specks of light on the reservoir. His glance travel led around its metal rim, which was fastened to the three chains by which the whole hung from the ceiling, over the table. Even the little clamps which pressed the burner more tightly against the glass chimney made him feel tender, for he saw in them a small detail belonging to the past.

It seemed nearly impossible that, in this peaceful atmosphere, one could be pursued by obsessions. Had it been reality or once more hallucination? Though the light shone calmly in the living room, the shadows in the arches of the arcades must have helped to evoke the adorable image: the face of Maria. Or rather, as he imagined the face of the little girl must have developped into maturity. Framed by the arch, it looked like a piously enlarged household photo of a woman who had died young. She had on a white linen blouse, tucked in a black skirt. It was the European profile; her hair also stood out more than is mostly the case with negroes... But it was not possible... He had also heard the shuffling of the housekeeper's sandals, and Maria could not possibly be the housekeeper here. She was a teacher in town, among the priests and the nuns who had brought their religion and their religious teachings to the little negroes of the island. Pure coincidence; the housekeeper bore some resemblance to Maria, which was not surprising, she was, perhaps, yes, even quite probably, related to Maria... Nevertheless he walked rapidly, almost

ran, to the kitchen. As he went past the arcade he saw his own shadow, like a black cloak blowing from his shoulders. There was no one in the kitchen. The charcoal fire was already out; in the semi-darkness he saw a cat curled up on a chair.

He retraced his steps. First glowing eyes and now the face of Maria. Where would this end? Why did this woman hover so invisably around him? She had cleared the table while he was in his bedroom musing over paintings in the Tate Gallery. Why this invisible hovering about? In the writing room he pulled open one of the desk drawers. It was empty, only the plank was stained with dried up ink spots. In another drawer lay a browning, next to a yellow yard stick and an electric torch which he tried; he laid the browning and electric torch on the table and shoved the drawer closed. In the following drawer were only some wads of paper, resting on an open package of candles. It was in the fourth one that he found the shells he had gathered for his father on the white sand by the sea. Fritz turned the shells around and around in his hand; he felt the protuberances with his fingers but he had no eye now for their changeable colours and mother-of-pearl sheen, which had so attracted him formerly. He stared vaguely before him, he saw the face framed by the arcade; he had seen the eyes move slightly away, with fear, as if Fritz might mean misfortune for her. Had he ever meant misfortune to Maria? His thoughts travelled once more to the little girl with whom he had sat on the moss grown bench, in the palm grove. His heart melted with pity... He remembered how he had once scolded Maria. He had seen her lips tremble, but she had immediately pressed them together, like a brave little girl who did not want to cry... Before the first tear fell, he had kissed her, somewhere on the cheek...

Who knows how unhappy she may have felt later... When a negro boy became a school teacher, his motive was obvious, his aim was quite clear: he wished to improve himself, not to be a servant any longer. But, on the other hand, a girl like Maria became a teacher because she wished to satisfy the demands made on her, nothing more... Who had made the demand on her to become a school teacher?... A girl like Maria would also be capable of returning to the place of her origin, just as Fritz had returned. Who knows but that, impelled by an inner urge, she had really exchanged her position as a teacher at the girls' school in town for life on the plantation again. From an inner urge to return to the place of her origin. She had given up the stockings and also the high-heeled shoes.

Fritz let his fancy run on, as he played with the shell in his hand. Finally he dropped it in the drawer; then he picked up another, to which he gave as little attention. In his fancy he convinced himself that it was really Maria whom he had seen. Into his fancy slipped, unnoticed, a strange elation.

She had given up the stockings and the high-heeled shoes. She stood there again in her sandals, as when she had played with Fritz in the different parts of the plantation: the beach, the palm grove. Perhaps, too, in the little garden they had planted together behind the house; they had sown bean and melon seeds and also some unknown kind, filched from a drawer, of which the future had had to reveal what they would yield. Who knows, perhaps Maria had enlarged that little garden and still squatted attentively next to a blade with two pods, or next to the melon vines, blurred and fuzzy, like the legs of insects. Possibly she even grew the useless things that are flowers: roses, dahlias, camelias... But who or what could

have whispered to her to give up teaching and return to the plantation? It must have happened this way: She fell ill in the barren lifeless town. It will not only have been the shoes with the high heels that pinched her. No. The sweet nuns and the good priests will not have forgotten to exercise their pressure on her too. She will have fallen ill and come to spend some weeks with her grandfather, the caretaker. She will have gone back again, and returned once more. And then one day the thought ripened in her mind, just to stay away, never to put on the shoes with the high heels again, nor to climb on the bus that passed twice a day, nor to pay her respects to the Mother Superior ever again... Just stay here... Among the melons and roses and palms... The North-east trade wind blows through your hair... Life becomes sad, but full of a significance it misses elsewhere.

Fritz Ruprecht smiled tenderly. To achieve this she must have made up some kind of story to tell the caretaker. With his blank eyes that stared into the distance, it will have made him wonder to hear that a girl would want to exchange her respectable position as teacher for that of common servant on a plantation...

But perhaps she had not made up any story to tell the caretaker. Perhaps she had not returned to the plantation at all and these things were but figments of Fritz' imagination. Even so, he was unable to tear himself away from the almost frightening fascination of the other possibility: that he was only separated from her now by a few meters, that he only had to push open a door to experience the gentleness of her presence again. Fritz felt an irresistable impulse mounting in him to go to Maria's room and awaken her and ask her everything. How she had managed. And if his father had helped her. And

if she wanted to remain here always... As she was, without a man... And wither gradually... And die away, like an autumn leaf sinks deeper into the earth, and dies...

Fritz put the shells together again, pushing them into a heap as he had found them. Slowly he began to close the drawer. It hardly moved. Fritz thought: why should I not go to her and comfort her, who really is: my sister the negro? It could be accepted almost as a fact that she really was his sister, that she was not the daughter of Theodore, who swung doors for drowning Lesbians, but of Alexander Ruprecht, Fritz' father who, one night, had become enchanted by the caretaker's daughter as unexpectedly as by the rose-colored insides of the shells

Fritz banged the drawer closed and walked out of his father's study. He noticed that the woman had moved through the house again, while he had been in his father's study thinking about Maria; she had blown out the lamps in the front and rear parts of the house, only leaving the wick turned low in the living room. A woman moved around him in decreasing circles, or was it he who moved around the woman, approaching her? As he walked towards her room, the doubt rose once more in his heart, though now for the last time: whether she was Maria and whether Maria was really his sister. Then he forgot all doubt, for he no longer consulted the conjectures of his reason, he was in another world. He had already reached her door. He opened it, took one step and then another into the room, but still held the door knob in his hand behind him, and did not close the door. In the dark he heard how still she lay, without breathing. A sudden change took place in his feelings for Maria. He heard the whirring of the silence, he heard the whirring of his own blood. The scent of

the woman hung in the room. It was as if he went towards something new, something shining. It was no longer the child in Maria that awakened his tenderness, but the woman who intoxicated him infinitely... Maria, or the other, who looked like her and who could be none other than Maria on this night... He reflected how strangely they were stranded together... Here, where everything was so far from Asia, America, Europe, with their sombre strivings in which, if he was not mistaken, he had also participated for awhile.. How insignificant their two powerless bodies seemed to him, breathing slowly - like animals in a corral - in this white house on a hill, where every glimmer of light was swallowed by the night, and every sound by the rustling of palms and sea. It was not only succumbing to his loneliness that drove him to her. In his vivid imagination he saw how the slight little sister had grown into a young woman. He looked on with delight. And as he visualized the ripening of the familiar little girls' body, it awakened in him a desire for her feminine maturity, for her embraces, for the curves of her body. His hand still rested on the door knob. He still heard how quietly she lay, without breathing. With his heart beating in his throat, he closed the door. It was so dark, he could not see his hand in front of him... Maria, or the other, did not resist him; she did not even make a shy attempt to. The arms, that she threw around his neck, held him tight against her for a moment; then she released him and holding him at arm's length told him: ‘Do you know, Fritz, how I have always remembered you? As the little boy, different from the others, with the two parts in your hair, your lock, your spiteful little mouth...’

He was startled for a moment because now it was an irrevocable certainty that this really was Maria. But she closed

her arms around him laughingly; the spiteful little Fritz. His body relaxed in her embrace until it was he who embraced and her body that relaxed. His hand had already begun to caress the curve of her hip, the tenderness in his heart was flowing over into bodily desire, when suddenly the sound of violent rattling on the front door reached him. Fritz jumped up and stood by the bed. Tears of fury rushed to his eyes. And he tasted the bitterness in his mouth. Gruffly he snapped at her:

'Have you a man around here?'

'A man, Fritz?'

'Don't play dumb. Have you a man? Yes or no?'

'No. But what is the matter, Fritz? Let me open the door.'

'No. You stay here.'

They would not get him. It was not that easy to square accounts with Fritz Ruprecht. He turned the key in her door; he still heard her voice: but Fritz, why do you do that?... In the living room he blew out the lamp so that the house was in darkness. He walked to his father's writing room, reached for the browning, pulled out the magazine; it was empty. He pulled the drawers open, two at a time; no bullets. He did find cartridges for the shot gun that stood in the corner. He threw the browning and magazine across the table. He grabbed the gun, loaded it. The rest of the cartridges and the electric torch he shoved into his pocket. He locked that door too and walked through the dark towards the front door. Again he heard the rattling. The sound enraged him. When he reached the door, he stood still, held his breath and listened. Just as the rattling began again, he jerked the door open and pointed the electric torch at the visitor: the blank eyes of the caretaker, that stared into the distance.

‘What do you want at this hour, Wancho? I thought everyone still went to bed at eight o'clock here. This is the third time today that you've tried my patience. Couldn't you have waited till to-morrow?’

‘Mister Fritz...’

‘Mister Fritz nothing. Go along to bed. We can talk tomorrow...’

‘Mister Fritz...’

‘I remember those tricks. Surprise people in the middle of the night and think you can get what you want...’

‘I don't want anything, Mister Fritz...’

‘We know all about that not wanting anything. A goat for Aunt Carolina's birthday. Or a rabbit for Aunt Esmeralda. You'll get it all. But to-morrow. Not to-night. And now to bed, Wancho. I don't want to hear any more rattling. Sleep well.’

As he was about to slam the door in Wancho's face, he heard a scream as unreal as when he had opened the door of his mother's bedroom, at the beginning of the evening:

‘Maria is your father's daughter!’

He jerked the door open again. He did not know exactly what happened then. Probably he slipped on the worn doorsill, fell with his arms floundering in the air so that the barrel of the gun struck Wancho on the chest. When he recovered himself and was standing up again, his first thought was: lucky that the trigger spring wasn't released - only that had to happen too... He helped Wancho up, who had fallen when the gun struck him, and was moaning softly.

He had to do it by feeling, it was so dark; there were no stars to be seen, the sky was overcast. With words Ruprecht could easily hide his emotion from the old man whose teeth were still chattering audibly from the fright.

‘Nothing has happened, Wancho. I only slipped so that my gun hit your chest. It was your chest, wasn't it?’

‘Yes, my chest...’ He could hardly get the words out.

‘Shall we put on some light and see what has happened?’

‘No, not inside. Maria must not know anything about this. I was only frightened, I feel no pain.’

‘Well, as you wish it, Wancho. But let me go with you until you've recovered from the fright.’

Wancho let himself be led by the arm, while Ruprecht reassured him.

‘I only slipped. You musn't think any more about it. You know, I myself had a slight suspicion that Theodore was only used as a cover. It was easy to suspect that because my father let Maria study to be a school teacher. I need not hide anything from you. You are an old man, your life was worth more to my father than mine, you have a right to know everything.’

The gravel on the driveway crunched under their feet. A glow worm shone and faded, the only light in the dark night. By the way the old mans arm rested on Ruprecht's, the latter understood that he must still accompany him a little way further.

‘I admit, Wancho, that your granddaughter is a pretty girl. I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jeruzalem. Do you remember that from the song of songs? I think you know the bible better than I do. If I had not at all suspected the truth, there might have been something to fear. But Wancho, good Wancho, why should I have such haste?’

Ruprecht felt the arm he was supporting begin gradually to withdraw.

‘Wancho, I think that you believe me to be more wicked than I really am.’

He heard Wancho's shuffling gait beside him. He could have gone on walking for hours next to the old man, silently, without thinking. But above all, he did not wish to trouble him; as soon as he felt that the other no longer needed his support, he took leave of him.

'Well, Wancho, let us shake hands. Sleep well.'

'Sleep well, Mister Fritz. Do not be offended with me. I have seen many misfortunes. Some that I could have spared others.'

For a moment, the thin old negro hand rested in the young hand of the white man.

'Sleep well, Wancho.'

The two parted. Wancho walked on. Ruprecht stood looking in the direction where he had disappeared, until he could no longer hear his steps. Hesitating, he stood there in the silence, then he turned suddenly, he had heard rustling behind him. He listened. It sounded like the whispering of human voices. For a moment he even thought he heard soft footsteps and giggling. He steadied himself, became alert; it had sounded so precisely like human whispering and laughing. But it must have been gusts of wind in the palm grove, that rebounded through the trees, creaking and grating. For some reason it reminded him of Karl who, as a boy, could only laugh at the expense of others. But Karl was reading Othello now with his incomprehensible smile, that lingered between willfulness and enmity.

This unpleasant memory of Karl swept past him, however, as swiftly as the breeze that blew through his hair... Fritz turned around. A grievous way back to the house, where he had found a sister, but lost a sweetheart. He was so tired that he only thought for a moment of something he could tell Maria and than gave it up again.

Come, what must! But when he opened her door and found the room lighted, he understood immediately that Wancho's cry of fear had also penetrated here. She was half sitting up in bed with wide open eyes, staring at the floor. He sat down beside her, did not know what to say, and also stared at the floor. Finally he put his arm around her shoulder. He pressed his face against hers. She let him do it but her face did not press back against his as his mother's did in times past. They sat like that for awhile. Then he began to rock her slowly back and forth. And he made the humming sound, deep in the breast with teeth clenched, as he had formerly done with his mother. The tears rolled slowly from her eyes... Life became sad, but it became full of a significance that it missed elsewhere. And that is the one thing that cannot be taken from the children of this earth.

Pages from a diary in Geneva

3.6.1956.

The French dictionary gives two translation of ‘fountain’: ‘la fontaine’ and ‘le jet d'eau’. Yet there is a big difference between these. ‘Jet d'eau’ is a jet of water, which forms only part of a fountain. ‘Fountain’ is a jet of water plus its natural or artificial surroundings, which especially lends itself as a symbol for everything that can be regarded as a source of lucidity and rejuvenation.

‘Je meurs de soif auprès de la fontaine’, this marvellous line of Villon could not be replaced by the variation ‘je meurs de soif auprès du jet d'eau’.

Every time I look out of the window I am surprised anew by the fountain of Geneva. It is a jet of water that is spouted 120 metres high from an electric plant on the left bank (data from Guide Bleu). I am told that it is the highest water jet in whole Europe. I have almost expressed myself incorrectly and said that it falls open like a fan. That would certainly be a false image. Sometimes a jet of water from a fountain falls in even arcs on both sides, like a fan opens. Not so with this ‘jet d'eau’, which curves over to one side only. It looks more like an enormous goose-feather, the writing instrument of a titanic godess, who is head over heels in love. It can also be likened to a veil caught in a gust of wind.

Just now it is twelve o'clock noon, the rays of the sun are caught in the veil, forming a rainbow, that arches above the colorful waterscape. The lake is green with blue nuances. The boulevard is swarming with people in gay clothes. The bathing suits on the pier of the Paquis keep to hard elementary colors. The surface of the lake is crowded with sailing boats of

different sizes with sails of glaring white, red, orange and green, and lake-boats, trading along the large lengths of the Swiss and French flags behind them. People and ships form centers of color, that continue spiral-shaped, in the vibration of the air. It is clearly one of the first real summer days.

4.6.1956.

It is my intention to pass the time on the hotel-terrace making notes for my diary while awaiting E. 's return. We will then have dinner here as the evening falls. In such a milieu you can scarcely eat, you can at the very least, ‘partake of the evening meal’. I have once more grown accustomed to the fountain (le jet d,eau, that is). It is no longer conspicuous, perhaps because the jets, out of the center of our solar system, do not produce shades of the rainbow now. My interest is caught elsewhere. I remark the hilly and mountainous landscape on the other side (the Rive Gauche). You could speak of a landscape in four plans. To begin with, you have the summer green of the parks. Geneva is called the ‘city of a thousand parks’. Maybe only the ‘city of parks’, the cardinal number is my own addition; the exageration must contribute to the ‘picturesque’. Then follows a fairly high range of hills in darker green. After this you have the first chain of mountains, grey-green in color. And finally, farthest in the distance, the pale silhouettes of the highest mountains of all, including Her Majesty the Mont Blanc. They are white rather than pale silhouettes, if I may be permitted this subtlety. You speak of pale souls, pale cities, pale minarets; it seems to me incorrect to speak of pale mountains. In any case they are silhouettes, I could not express it differently. They do not

possess any volume, with their two-dimensional forms. They can become blurred and retreat to invisibility at any moment. When the highest peaks are invisible, the guides yield to the temptation of pointing out a medium high one as the Mont Blanc. The tourists should not be disappointed, there are whole tribes who come here especially far the view of Mont Blanc. Therefore the medium high peaks are known as the 'Mont Blanc of the tourists'. Geneva has 210.000 inhabitants, 40,000 of which are foreigners. Just now, with the yearly Conference of the International Labour Organization, the number of foreigners has increased substantially. Moreover, the number of foreigners has increased relatively still more. The delegates to the conference do not remain indoors, they are always out. The women are by far in the majority, possibly because they are more conspicuous. From a Superintendent of police comes the statement that a temporary permit is extended to 500 prostitutes. He added that this was done chiefly in consideration of the delegates from the Arabian and Latin countries. For the one group in accordance with their polygamous beliefs and for the second to oblige them with an escape from their monogamy. They, the women, possess the charms of 'L'Eve Future' of Villiers de l'Ile Adam, the attractions of women who have little personality, but just the more make-up, the more sex-appeal.

I am continually seeing resemblances to people I have known elsewhere... High functionaries and women of dubious alloy from European and Caribbean cities. I will pass over this part in silence. Diaries can come before the eyes of others. Even in a diary you cannot speak quite open-heartedly. Files of autos and scooters are passing by. I discover more and more resemblances. I have the feeling I have seen this all formerly.

The world is essentially the same everywhere. I am on the verge of 'déjà vu'. Perhaps I am only tired. I would like to see my face in a mirror, that would be the only way to come to a conclusion. I am suddenly aware, that the tall waiter who serves me, is leaning against the wall with his arms folded laughing slowly to himself. From where this secret amusement? I look more sharply. The traffic has slackened considerably. I see two traffic policemen in smart grey uniforms. They stop all scooters and examine their licenses. The autos are allowed to go on, but the scooters are motioned aside. They are looking for scooters, because the motorcycles are also allowed to go on.

I turn to the waiter with the secret amusement.

'What is the matter?' I ask.

'They are looking for a band of thieves.'

He evidently finds it a big joke, he cannot restrain his laughter. I thought that I should continue the conversation.

'They are Italian, I suppose.'

The waiter looks intently at me, I am obviously on thin ice.

'Why should they be Italian?' he asks.

I am at a loss, and tell him that I saw an excellent film about Italian bicycle thieves. He looks at me dejectedly.

'But, Sir, a film is only a film.' I understood. The man is Italian. I have made my first blunder in Geneva. There is no doubt about that.

5.6.1956.

As I was crossing the Pont du Mont Blanc to the Rive Gauche a passage from Stendhal flashed through my mind. I think it is in 'Mémoires d'un Touriste'. He considers it a piece of good luck to walk across the bridge in Geneva. You can see

the young women approaching in the distance. Then you are given the opportunity to observe them in detail. He thinks the young women of Geneva are remarkably attractive; but, he adds, it does not take long before they show the deformations of Calvinism. He is of the opinion that the Milanese beauties (les belles Milanaises), on the contrary, as far as outer beauty is concerned, do not suffer from their association with the Jesuit confessors. Just now, walking across the bridge, I wondered what the reason could be for the difference between the girls of Geneva and those of Milan. Catholicism is a more human religion than Calvinism. It permits certain forms of exuberance that are beneficial to outer beauty. Especially in Milan where the genre is not the same as the Catholicism in Northern countries, which is often three parts Calvinism. In any case, the pedestrian, on his way from the Rive Droite to the Rive Gauche is amply rewarded. The young women come across the bridge with their attractions.

6.6.1956.

Opening of the Conference. The large conference hall is packed to the roof, with the exception of the platform where the committee table and the secretaries' tables are still empty. Including the guests in the public gallery, there must be some 1500 people present. The large number is in accordance with the principles of representation in the International Labour Organization. These are regulated in article 3 of the Statute of the International Labour Organization (commonly called the ILO, after the English initials). The article is predominated by two principles. Primarily by that of *universalism;* it stipulates that all members of the United Nations can be admitted without qualification, thus, irrespective of their

constitutional structure. Soviet Russia, Franco Spain and Drees Netherlands are all equally welcome! The organization counts 76 member states which, with a few exceptions, are all represented at the 39th Conference. The article is further predominated by the idea of the tripartite system (called for short: tripartism); it provides that the member states will not only be represented by the Governments but also by deputies from the employers' and employees' organizations. These deputies, the delegates in the narrower sense, are aided by experts. The latter also in accordance with tripartism; there are experts of the Governments, of the employers and of the employees. The Delegation of the Netherlands numbers eighteen persons who are, at this historical moment, preparing to put on their headphones.

The conference is further attended by observers, coming from countries which have obtained a certain degree of self-government, though have not yet been admitted as members of the ILO. They are more or less exotic figures from semi-colonial territories. The names speak for themselves. The observers come from the Gold Coast, Jamaica, Malayan Federation, Malta, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somaliland and Trinidad. The Surinamese and Antillians could also attend the Conference in the capacity of observers, but they chose rather to participate in the Government delegation of the Netherlands as technical advisors. And lastly, the United Nations is also represented here today by its specialized organizations (Unesco, World Health Organization, etc.), as well as the international non-governmental organizations with which the ILO maintains permanent relations (e.g. I.C.F.T.U.).

Naturally the public gallery is filled with the ‘crême de la crême’ of the ‘haute ville’ (the fashionable quarter of

Geneva): appealing young girls with a tendancy to blush fleetingly, or old maids with a Calvinistic tic, strewn among members of the diplomatic ranks in Geneva. A few conspicuous wenches are mixed in with the fashionable company, possibly a part of the 500 prostitutes who were permitted to attend for purposes not having a direct connection with the work of the International Labour Conference.

The main floor of the Conference hall is divided by aisles into four sections of benches, running some 25 rows deep; each bench seats four persons; two government delegates, one for the employers' and one for the employees' organizations. The government delegates have doublé the number of votes, in order to obviate precarious situations; precarious situations threaten at every moment during such a conference. The other participants, the experts and observers, have been given seats on the mezzanine floor and in the boxes which line the sides of this floor.

The experts (technical advisors) occupy benches in the middle and boxes on the right side. The boxes on the left are filled with observers. The public gallery is just above and to the rear of the mezzanine floor.

We await the appearance of the President of the Governing Body, who will take his place back of the committee table with his secretaries. It is the custom of the Conference to be opened by this functionary. In this case, he bears a distinctly English name, he is called Mr. Brown. The period of waiting is utilized in various ways. Some are more impatient than others. We play with the headphones in our hands. We try to orientate ourselves with the aid of the guide-book, a handy little book, the English one red, the French blue, the Spanish olive-green. In the first section to the right in the hall, quite

in front, are sitting the Russian delegation. The leader, comrade Arutiunian, a Georgian of dark complexion, could be taken for a South American, were the fury on his face less obvious. The Americans are sitting in the same section, farther back; a pronounced figure cannot be distinguished among them; they all look the same, travelling salesmen who employ more or less civilized efforts to raise sales and to dodge taxes. In the delegation of the United Kingdom seated in the section to the left of the Americans, Mr. Snedden, a snappish representative of the employers' organization attracts notice. In the third section can be seen the delegations from Iran and Burma. We all have an especial interest in them. The chairmen of the delegations of Iran and Burma have both been nominated as candidates for the chairmanship of the 39th Conference of the International Labour Organization. Each of them is Minister of Social Affairs in his respective country, for the rest, they have very Little in common. They are antipodes. Mr. Raschid of Burma is a thin man, the Indo type with clear signs of rancorous feelings in the nervous twitches of his face. Mr. Mohsen Nasr of Iran is a rather stout diplomat with a sad and ironical expression on his face. Now I know, Mr. Mohsen Nasr is the double of Mr. Eduard Elias of Elsevier's Weekly, whom I have not seen for such a long time in The Hague, and whom I find here in Geneva now, disguised as the Minister of Social Affairs of Iran. Perhaps I should warn him that he is running the risk of being unmasked, but he is a man of the world and must know how to take care of himself. I am quite certain that Eduard Elias alias Mohsen Nasr will be the victor. Ironical sadness is a better weapon than nervous rancour for diplomats.

To the left, where the observers are sitting, the members of the Nigerian delegation are attracting much attention. They

are dressed in native costumes, a tunic draped with multi-colored silk cloths. Mr. S.F. Okotie Eboh, Minister of Labour in Nigeria, attracts the most attention. He is the corpulent type of negro, wearing glasses with tortoise-shell upper rims, in the American fashion. Things are whispered about him, he is called Big Chief. He is head of the Government delegation, besides being chairman for the employers' as well as for the employees' organizations. The rumour goes that he owns 51 % of the shares of all companies in his country. It will be a falsehood, but the combination of pomp and bonhomie lends itself to the fabrication of legends. It pleases Europeans to place representatives of former colonies in a dubious light. The stories of corruption are made to order. It is extraordinarily difficult for a European to keep to sober facts when colonial problems are being treated, in such cases he is very soon the victim of unbridled fancy. The time passes. Now an army of photographers moves through the hall, their apparatuses flash. The persiflage disappears, and in its place comes the serious forehead or the knowing smile.

I look at the public gallery and try to find E... She has put on her dark glasses to protect herself against the flash of lights. I try to greet her. I raise my hand. A conspicuous lady answers my greeting. She thinks that I can no longer contain myself. She offers me a laugh with her lips, red as a dahlia. She murmurs the words: ‘Je suis martiniquaise’. The army of photographers rushes towards the platform. Some go and stand immediately in front of it, others climb the steps to the right and left. The members of the Governing Body enter, preceded by Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown stands erect for a few moments as though listening to a National anthem; the photographers' apparatuses flicker like nervous chirping birds in a volery. The

photographers become annoying, they are gently pushed aside by the ushers. The 39th Conference has commenced.

Mr. Brown declares that it is the custom for the chairman of the Governing Body to open the Conference and offer some reflections in the light of the great events which have taken place during the preceding year. Well then, in compliance with this obligation, he finds it impossible to point to any spectacular event. Nevertheless he will not refrain from mentioning a certain improvement and a lessening of the international tension brought about by a meeting of The Big Four, held here in Geneva in July of last year.

Mr. Brown talks on. It is not likely that he attaches undue importance to the meetings at Geneva, nor to the Big Four, nor to the 72 lilliputians, but he is a man of common sense, who, for the time being, prefers the prying clique of the diplomats to the destructive spirit of military staffs. He likes the red and white roses of the Parc de la Grange better than the nuclear mushroom formations over the Pacific ocean.

The procedural questions follow; first the election of a chairman of the Governing Body. The French delegate, a rather large man with a pug nose expresses his regret that the chairman cannot be chosen by unanimous approval this time; there were two candidates this year though it had been the custom until now to nominate only one. After this intelligent remark, the delegate of Ceylon announces that he will vote for Mr. Raschid, because his country has already ratified 21 labour conventions. According to this line of thought, though be it mentioned here in all modesty, the representative of the Netherlands Antilles should then be chosen as chairman. At present, in the Netherlands Antilles, some 33 conventions have

been declared applicable. The Turkish delegate motivates his vote by remarking on the venerable antiquity of the Persian civilization. Mr. Mohsen Nasr's smile expresses his sad though honoured feelings. He understands. The odd motivations must serve to cover the conflicting situation. The Asiatic countries support Mr. Raschid, the Western countries Mr. Mohsen Nasr. The contest is decided in favor of the Western countries. The Asiatics did not succeed in winning the support of all the members of the Arabian league and the South American caucus.

Some moments later Mr. Brown has relinquished his chairman's seat to the rather stout diplomat with the sad, ironical expression. Here they call him Mohsen Nasr, in the café's in the Hague, they would call him Mr. Elias. It is now 1 o' clock p.m.

7.6.1956.

Notes from the Salle des Pas Perdus. I know that during the next three weeks I will find myself regularly in this space. I would hardly call it a hall, it is a large space in which one of the walls is formed by a view of the garden, the lake of Geneva, the chains of hills and the sky. The garden and lake of Geneva can only be seen if you stand close to the window. I am sitting in an arm-chair quite at the back. I can see only the grey-blue sky. Emptiness also predominates inside. Here and there in one of the leather arm-chairs sits a delegate, reveiling in doing nothing (dolce far niente). Now and then someone steps from the elevator; the elevator boy stands subserviently aside. To the left in the corner, near the window, is a long writing-table. A couple of South Americans and Arabs are sitting there now, writing yard-long letters full of fatherly

pride and feudal worry or love letters with terms of double entendre and fancies.

The monotony is broken by an invasion of a group of tourists, being conducted around the building. The guide places himself before the window, points to the view and begins to talk. His voice sounds familiar to me, but I cannot place it at first. I stare at his back and only succeed in recognizing him when he is compelled to turn around by my stare. He has recognized me, I see it from the expression of surprise on his face. Beyond a doubt, he is a White Russian, whom I have known in Paris about the beginning of the thirties. We both belonged to the Bohème of Montparnasse then. He was known generally as a talented artist. He made especially good posters. Yet he was more interesting as a person than as an artist. The story went, that he was the son of a former lieutenant-general, who had exchanged the cavalry for the diplomatic service, in which he had represented his country at Constantinople for a rather long time. It was to this fact, that his son's predilection for cupola-like forms was attributed. He was a ‘tall handsome young man’, with an extremely wry smile, who always endeavored to keep his distance by speaking on an objective basis. He seldom allowed himself to be drawn into a political discussion, but restricted himself to remarks about the art of painting and music and especially about the Russian Ballet. He believed that communism, a system of pronounced political character, would excercise little or no influence on the arts.

‘Vous verrez,’ he said, ‘in twenty or thirty years from now, it will again be Diaghilev, Nijinsky and Pavlowa, though with other names, who will conquer the European public and the European heart.’

His name emerges again from my memory. Alexey Vsevolo-

dovitch. He has recognized me, but probably asks himself with a wry expression if I belong to reality or to the world of ghosts. I do not feel much like reassuring him. It does not seem the right moment to renew the contact of a quarter of a century ago. I do not move a muscle but stare glassily in front of me, I refrain from any human movement or expression and fully answer to the idea of a ghost. Finally he convinces himself that I belong to the world of apparitions, and walks on with his herd. I get up, walk to the window and return again to one of the empty arm-chairs. Someone has left the art page of a French newspaper behind. I pick it up and become absorbed in a notice concerning Salvador Dali. I see the announcement of a brochure by S.D., with as title 'Les Cocus du Vieil Art Moderne' (Collection Libelles, Fasquelle Paris). In it he proposes to give an exposition of his development from Salvador Dali to Avidadollars, the anagram with which André Breton has sketched the painter's lust for gold. Further, some maxims were given about Dali's attitude towards certain edibles. He names the cauliflower as his favorite vegetable, because it reminds him most of a boiled chicken. Vermicelli he appreciates because of its suppleness, absence of taste and other virgin-like qualities. Without a doubt, S.D.'s significance lies in his hard boiled absurdity. If desired, the kitchen term can be omitted and experimental absurdity put in its place (plastic genre).

I have forgotten S.D. again. Now I am listening to the conversation of a Dutch pair, who do not recognize in me a fellow-countryman and continue their conversation in a clearly audible tone. It is a reporter, who betrays his background of the better classes, by a certain affectation in his speech. He is just unfolding his opinion of the Swiss. His partner is a young

woman with the double face from the ‘ugly period’ of Picasso (exhibition 1946 at Amsterdam). The one face looks highly critical, the other confines itself to as high a degree of admiration. I listen:

‘Generally speaking, the difference between the German Swiss and French Swiss can be formulated like this. The German Swiss has too little, the French Swiss too much civilization. The German Swiss makes a boorish, the French Swiss a dull impression.’

I do not know if I also suffer from a double face, in any case I am prepared to declare my approval of the mans marginalia.

9.6.1956.

Visited today the exposition ‘The railroad in art’ (Le chemin de fer dans l'art) in the Musée d'Art et d'histoire.

I would like to differentiate three periods:

1. the heroic epoch of railroad traffic. The railroad still had to secure a place for itself in the world. It was recommended by sugary English prints and caricatured by the marvellous engravings of Daumier. Daumier's engravings are in themselves a justification for the existence of this mechanical animal;
2. the intimate period. The smoky mechanical animal has become a part of our familiar surroundings. The impressionists have a tendency to envelop it in smoke clouds which spread slowly in the overdamp Western-European atmosphere. Lovers of painting are necessarily reminded of Claude Monet's Gare St. Lazare, a painting that is sadly missing here. The intimate period has a certain number of themes, which always reappear on the canvasses: the mechanical caterpillar in the spacious landscape, the lonely village stations, cold and desolate, that

touch you co the core, the mathematical line-play of rails in the yards. The names of early and late impressionists come to our mind. In this intimate period they best fit the characteristic given by Schmidt Degener in his splendid essay about Flaubert: a mixture, he writes, of romanticism and realism, of imagination and observation;

3. the energetic period of railroad traffic. The world, in general, has lost its intimacy, it is attuned only to its energies. It strives to turn around as swiftly as possible, it delights in nuclear fantasies, it will probably explode. The locomotive, with its sparks and flames, plays a more important role than the compartments where the travelling salesmen lay down a card, a young mother nurses her baby or an abbot with a purple calotte enjoys a Cezanne pear. Maurice de Vlaminck had already one leg in the energetic period, but the best exponents are the futurists.

Involuntarily one thinks of the end of ‘Awater’ by M. Nijhoff:

> ...I'd seen a train which I must run to catch.
> The fireman shovels coal on to the fire.
> Leaning aside the driver scans the night.
> Beyond the platform, o'er the gleaming rails,
> the semaphores intone their overture.

and the last lines:

> ...She chants, she bends a knee in clouds of steam
> to leave at last at the appointed hour.*)

Nijhoff is too sensitive to be a futurist. He was not a steel animal, at times he was even a woolly one.

*) From the translation by Daan van der Vat

10.6.1956.

Aboard the Lake boat ‘Lausanne’ between Montreux and Geneva. The article about romantic-rationalism from the same hand that now uses this pen, was written in quite another climate than Schmidt Degener's splendid essay about Flaubert. The only thing they have in common, this angular, apodictic article and the flowing, polished essay, is that they couple as opposites imagination and reason, lyricism and documentation. When I wrote that article, Flaubert was far from my thoughts. In fact up to that time I had never been able to finish a novel of Flaubert; deep in my soul, his refined grade of artisticity could not compensate for his suppressed emotionality.

The authors I was thinking of then were Edgar Allan Poe, Byron, Kierkegaard and Unamuno. I could add many more to this list but will suffice with the above. Of these four only Poe can be placed on a parallel with Flaubert. Poe sought, as Flaubert did, for the equilibrium of opposing aspirations. Not so the other three.

Kierkegaard and Unamuno also understood romanticism and ratio, but their aspiration was not towards an equilibrium of opposites. They were pure imaginative authors who worked out their imagination in the sphere of rationalism. The ratio was for them the instrument on which their imagination played. It is in this that they approach the so-called existential authors and it is also because of this that it would be beside the point to compare Kierkegaard with Hegel in the same way in which a comparison could be drawn between Kant and Hegel. Byron was again a quite different case. The commonplace that brands him an out-and-out romantic, hits the mark. He was driven

by the imagination. With it, he had a keen eye for the peculiarities and particularly the absurdities of his surroundings. But as a romantic, he used his wealth of observations as obstacles, which had to be overcome in order to reach the free sphere of lyricism.

In this, he was not equal to himself. I look through the poems that I have marked during the years. The poem about his wife belongs to the kind of lyricism without a backbone, the swooning lyricism. It places him in the professional class of Lamartine. He also knew the type of romanticism which is practiced on a realistic basis. Dutch literature possesses a wealth of this kind of romanticism in poets such as Roland Holst and Jacques Bloem. One of the most beautiful poems of this genre is the poem ‘Loneliness’ of Roland Holst:

‘The wind and the grey weather pass over my heart...’

One of Byron's poems of this kind is the psychologically complicated but lyrically lucid poem:

> When we two parted
> in silence and tears.

Pure lyricism such as Shelley's and in a lesser degree Keats', in the modern form such as Van Ostayen's and the experimentalists' was unknown to Byron. His power of observation stood too much in the way for that, His lyrical drama ‘Manfred’ is a continual effort to break earthly ties; his ‘Don Juan’, on the other hand, the acceptance of fetters. ‘The Prisoner of Chillon’ is one of the rare poems of Byron in which a harmonious fusion of opposites is achieved. Then we find ourselves in the climate of Flaubert. The difference is, that with Flaubert, an equilibrium is attained through the frustration of emotions and with Byron this occurs without restraining his romanticism.

I still find the opening lines with the aged grey head terrible, but as a whole the poem is decidedly impressing.

In an edition of 1850 I found the following note in an introduction bearing no signature: ‘This is a beautiful poem; and we cannot help considering it the more so from there being nothing of the author's idiosyncrasy mingled with it - a very rare circumstance in Byron's writings.’

‘The Prisoner of Chillon’ is generally regarded as being inspired by François de Bonivard, who was kept prisoner by the Duke of Savoy for seven years in the dungeon of Chillon. This legend is carefully cultivated on the Lake of Geneva and especially at Chillon. For the benefit of the tourist industry. Naturally the facts are known. In the first (or second?) publication Byron, who was not averse to documented footnotes, added an explanation, which is mostly not included in other publications:

‘When this poem was composed I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonivard or I should have endeavored to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtue.’

The courage and virtues of Bonivard were not those of a romantic, but of a libertine. It is always taken too much for granted that the freedom of Geneva was won exclusively by Calvinists. Nothing is less true. In reality the story is quite different. The freedom of Geneva began with the libertines, with Bonivard as their leader. I cherish the illusion of writing a study about Bonivard sometime.

11.6.1956.

The ‘Théâtre de Pôche’, on the Grand'Rue is not much larger than two rooms ‘en suite’. The type that families use

for giving chamber concerts, where the guests listen with an attentive ear and critical expression until the intermission when they are served with a cup of tea, a slice of lemmon, a spoonful of sugar and a smile from the hostess. Then they can give their opinions on what they have heard. It is full in the Théâtre de Pôche. A comedy of Noel Coward is being given. It is about two pairs who have changed partners with each other because they no longer 'got along', and who 'got along' still worse after the exchange. It is laughable enough but, because of the limited space, you hardly dare to laugh heartily.

In one of the back seats, a shout of laughter breaks out. The élite in the front rows turn around, looking disturbed. They are evidently searching for the person guilty of disturbing the order. The actors, afraid of loosing the attention, stop playing. Finally the tension is broken when one of the leading actors, in fact there are only leading roles in the piece, remarks that an exchange has also taken place between players and audience. After a civilized laugh the play is continued.

It seems to me that the Théâtre de Pôche in Geneva is more suited to recitation of elegies than for laughable situations.

12.6.1956.

Meanwhile, the meetings of the ILO are being carried on at top speed. The immense building is a buzzing bee-hive, with lights going on and off in the halls, where swarms of people are being consumed by their inner grievances or permit themselves to make use of their right of 'voice and vote'. The speakers, especially if they enjoy their own eloquence, are much less dangerous than those who have character but not much talent.

To begin with there are the meetings of the different groups:

1. The well-dressed employer's attorneys, who assume an injured air of innocence. If these men are to be believed, the social will having them work at a loss.
2. The employees, who are not rigged up so poorly either, though they have not wholly discarded the viscous clothing from the times of social abasement.
3. The government delegates are a group of ash-grey head officials who are worrying about how to get out of this hornet's nest.

Secondly, there are the committee meetings, composed according to the rules of the tripartite system. The delegates sit at one of the three rows of tables placed at right angles to the chairman's table. The government delegates sit in the middle row in order to be more easily pelted by the employers and employees and partly also to work as buffers between these two groups considered since Marx to be natural enemies. The chairmen are of different nationalities. We have intellectual Israeli, accademical Pakistani. Hindus with algebraic formulas of wisdom, Arabs who become false with excitement, dreamy Latinos, Englishmen with an Oxford accent, Dutch with instructions to see first what the others do.

Every committee has its personal character, which is determined by the subject that is being dealt with. They could be divided in three classes: technical, spectacular though not hazardous, and political-explosive.

For example, I will risk characterizing the following committees as being technical for the time being, while awaiting the grievances they may afford the employers.

1. The committee on Vocational training in Agriculture.
2. The committee on Weekly Rest (for the purpose of providing a weekly rest for workers in commerce and offices).

3. The Finance Committee.

The committee to which the writer of these lines belongs can unquestionably be counted among the spectacular but not hazardous. It is the committee for Information and Reports about the application of Conventions and Recommendations. The criticism and remarks, coming mostly from the employees, also then and when from the employers, are generally given in the form of polite questions addressed to the government delegates. They are concerned with such matters as:

1. An incentive towards ratification of the conventions. At the moment 110 have been formulated by the ILO. The Netherlands, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles have ratified respectively 35, 33 and 34.
2. The commitment of obligations resulting from the ratification, i.e. the observance of the conventions. The Latinos have quite a habit of ratifying conventions but not observing them. It astonishes them, that this assemblage is surprised at this. Their countries are mostly under more or less benevolent dictators with a democratic constitution and preamble borrowed from the ‘droits de l'homme et du citoyen’. The Latinos have all read Rousseau, some of them only the cover jacket of ‘Contrat Social’, as a matter of fact, the most important part of the book; others discover everyday anew different nuances in the portrait of the most kittenish figure in the world literature, Mme de Warens.
3. The transmission of reports and information delivered to the Director General, to the labour organizations concerned, an observance which is easily forgotten by many governments because of their innate shyness for union leaders, but which does not lack clarity, particularly in the English text: ‘Each member shall communicate to the representative organizations

recognized for the purpose of article 3 copies of the information and reports communicated to the Director General in pursuance of article 19 and 22.'

The chairman of the workers' group is Mr. Cool, a Fleming who uses French. He makes an efficient and sympathetic impression.

The chairman of the employers' group in this committee is a reasonable man, who is without the usual disdain of the employer. He is primarily occupied with putting the Latinos in their place. The most hypocritical delegates are to be found in the English and French group. The Englishman is a careless 'thin man', unrecognizable behind his glasses and red beard. The Frenchman rocks back and forth, with his hands between his knees and shrinks with fear every time a question is put to him by a workers' representative, a thin negro with a flossy little beard, from Dahomey. If his answer is unsatisfactory the employees restrict themselves to subdued but prolonged jeering.

Now and then I go for a look at the explosive committees:

1) The committee charged with drawing up measures relating to forced labour. Explosive committee par excellence! Inflammable! The Western powers accuse the peoples' democracies of political forced labour, the terror in the satelite countries is emphasized. The totalitarian countries in their turn will not neglect exploiting the capitalistic exploitation in a demagogic manner.
2) The committee for Resolutions is also counted among the very dangerous this year. At first sight this committee looks as innocent as a babe. Its task is to pass judgements on draft resolutions, which are proposed by the member states. However, only a fleeting glance at a few of these drafts is necessary in

> order to sense the conflict. To begin with, the two super powers will have to make a statement about the reduction of armaments. It will be a sleuthhound's search for the aggressor. After all, no one arms himself if he does not see the helmeted head of his opponent rise above the horizon. There is also a proposed resolution which commits the member states to declare the labour conventions automatically applicable in the non metropolitan countries. This resolution is proposed by the Polish delegate and threatens to raise the tumult of a bear garden.

The resolution lacks all reasonableness: the application of a convention takes for granted the existence of certain social measures which in many cases have not been taken in the former colonies.

The Polish delegation, fed as it is by the Kremlin, is not concerned with reasonableness, but with a semblance of reasonableness. It is concerned with branding certain western powers to the core with the stamp of colonialism. It will not succeed, but in the meantime, it has had its ‘say’, its accusations formulated and put on the record. There are also resolutions of a more innocent nature.

1) measures to be taken in connection with automation
2) reduction in the number of working hours
3) the abolition of discrimination in salary on the basis of ability.

The number of people filling the public gallery forms a barometer for the sharpness of the conflict.

The committee meetings are held as much as possible in the mornings in halls which, though rather spacious, still seem too small for the members plus their secretarial staffs. It is mostly so dark (because of the overcast skies, quite unusual in

this month) that the lights have to be turned on, giving to daylight a false atmosphere well suited to these controversial meetings.

The members are given the opportunity to follow the plenary meetings in the afternoon in the large meeting hall (40 by 40), where the opening was held. The vehement clashes of the big powers are saved up for the plenary sittings. Any subject can flame up at any moment, at least if the head persons are present. It is remarkable then how quickly the public gallery fills up. The sensation loving public seems to sniff it. I have been told that the sympathizers of the contending parties are warned by wire-pullers, but it seems to me that the public as such has a good nose for sensational events. Tom, Dick or Harry would give his life to see a negro lynched, a royal palace in flames or a prophet being stoned. We have not yet reached the high point of the plenary sittings, what we see ate only skirmishes, even though the clashes have not been left out. Up to now the discussions have kept to questions of procedure and the report that is delivered by the Director General at the yearly assembly.

Questions of Procedure.

a) Election of the chairman, which has already taken place at the opening, with the result that the half amused, half saddened Mr. Mohsen Nasr presides behind the highest table on the platform in the plenary meeting hall.
b) Election of underchairmen. Passed unnoticed.
c) Election of the chairmen for the various groups of the governments, employers and employees. No particulars.
d. Forming of the committee of proposals, whose function

is to place before the plenary assembly eventual proposals of the members. The Frenchman M. Houck (large with a pug nose) is appointed chairman.

e) *Forming of Committees charged with treating the subjects placed on the agenda*.

This is the first serious point of opposition between the totalitarian countries and certain western delegates. In the employers' groups, the western delegates have made use of their majority to exclude representatives of the totalitarian countries as members of the committees. The totalitarian countries entered a protest. The difference of opinion is expressed in the antithesis *universalism* and *tripartism*. The communist representatives call for *universalism*, exclusion is stamped as discrimination by them. The democratic representatives are of the opinion that *tripartism* would be neglected by appointing employers who had no freedom with regard to their government. The discussion has been going on for some days. There is seldom any humour in the words, on the contrary the more scoffing. The government delegates, the ash-grey officials, have managed to conjure up a compromise. Article 56 of the Standing Orders will be used, which makes it possible to appoint so called ‘deputy members’ who should not be mistaken for the so called substitutes. Substitutes vote for the same nationality as the members they replace. Deputy members, if necessary, occupy a place when the group concerned is not wholly present and votes for his own nationality. The employers start perspiring, now they must take care to be always present. The late sleeping will have to be dispersed with. The Russians make life impossible. In the lobbies they walk around reading to one another article 56 of the Standing Orders as if it was a precious poem, and the incerpretation of

the meaning of ‘deputy member’, as if it concerned the nylon veil of Isis.

The discussion regarding the report of the Director General bears chiefly a propaganda-tinted character. It is seldom judged according to its own merit. It is used as pretext, it is employed for other purposes than those for which it is intended. The Sovjet use it as a spring-board for an attack on the United States. Japan carries on propaganda for its budding new industry. The representative of India becomes entangled as a fakir in the algebraic net of his wisdom. A representative of Pakistan floats on an academic level, he is impervious, you can watch him disappear. The big chief displays all his magnificence.

During the last hours the scoffing diminishes considerably. The head persons leave the hall. The public gallery empties. More and more empty places can be seen on the benches. I go to the restaurant and drink a café espresso. The coffee reminds you how near Italy is.

These meetings, different though they are, have one thing in common: that the chairman, mostly a powerful political figure, looses his self assurance as soon as complicated questions arise. He becomes pale, or blushes, according to his complexion and bends himself into a thousand curves, forwards, backwards, sideways to try to catch an answer from the intelligent secretaries.

1.6.1956.

It is around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I return from the Palais des Nations. I take the bus that rides to the Cornavin station. I get off between the two nude statues in a half reclining position, a young woman, who turns her face away

from a young man who, with his blind, sculptured eyes enjoys the excitation of his companion. This flirtation in stone is all the more conspicuous because the figures are slightly larger than life size. The first few days it attracted my attention, now I have become used to it, but in the company of notables I permit myself an allusion by way of badinage. I walk past the sidewalk cafés, they remind me of Paris, that metropolis of *perfidie et féerie*. I have passed many hours during the last week on one of the iron-lace chairs, at one of the iron-lace tables. But first I have bought a pile of newspapers in a store where writing-materials are sold. La Gazette de Genève, La Suisse, the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Figaro, New York Herald, the Observer etc. etc. The newspaper magnates have had, since my earliest youth, a very good client in me. Benjamin Constant sighs somewhere: 'Charlotte, Charlotte et les livres'. He could no more keep away from 'das ewig Weibliche' than from printed paper. Mostly I only read the headlines and paragraphs in heavy print, perhaps I am not a very thorough newspaper reader, but a lavish newspaper buyer I surely am. There are few things I take so much pleasure in as sitting at a sidewalk café, with a cup of coffee before me on the table and a pile of newspapers next to me on a chair, which I am able to scramble through to my heart's content.

Today I have withstood the temptation of the cafés; I walked right on to the Rue du Mont Blanc on my way to the hotel. I nearly said to my house, the hotel begins to take on the familiarity of an own home. I like sidewalk cafés, a feeling that many share with me, but I find sauntering around a town, especially a foreign town exceedingly nice. I stand still in front of a travelling company (agence de voyage). Nowadays you see such exquisite posters with bronzed bodies in bikinis, the

bows of ships, the musculature and despair of Michel Angelo in the Sixtine Chapel, processions and steer's horns in the yellow Andalusian sun. I must have been taken by surprise, and step inside the office. It strikes me again how dark Swiss interiors can be. A man behind the counter comes to attention to catch my questions and put them through an intellectual process. He believes, he has misunderstood and asks me to repeat my question.

'Je voudrais avoir des détails sur les excursions à Moscou.'

He answers irritably: 'Ah monsieur, ce sont pas des excursions, ce sont des croisières.'

'Ça revient au même,' I try to defend myself.

'Mais pas du tout. Une excursion ne prend que quelques heures, mais une croisière...'

He is a peevish Parisian, who evidently feels compromised by the 'croisière en U.R.S.S.', pronounced like 'ours' (bear) by the French, which is advertised on a poster decorated with cupolas of the Kremlin in the window. 'Croisière en U.R.S.S.' prix à partir de 80.000 frs. y compris le train spécial Leningrad-Moscou et retour.' I can read all of that on the cover of the folder, which he hands me silently. In answer to my next question he suffices with pointing to the folder which I have taken from him. Moscou awakens undue admiration or odd reactions of fear. Then I forget the incident and a few moments later turn into a side street to the left. I stand before a restaurant where the menu is framed in a small window. I enjoy an imaginary evening meal. First a consommé Madrilène, because the jelly is fresh in your mouth and tastes of nothing. Then poached turbot, because this also tastes of nothing, so that my mouth remains fresh. It is clear that I have ascetic tendencies today and will surely order vichy water for wine.

I will finish with an espresso, to have at least enjoyed something nice. I like Italians, for their unrestrained joy of living, their military uselessness and their immeasurable art treasures, but today most of all for their ‘espresso’. A little further on I stop in front of the windows of a large book shop. I am confirmed in the opinion that the Swiss have a child-like or doting attitude as regards printed paper, the illustrated works are far in the majority, the ones about flora and fauna as well as those about works of art through all the ages in word and image. Les voix du silence. Then I continue my journey, until I feel magnetically attracted by the interior of a shop with bathroom fixtures. A large supply of bath tubs, wash bowls and other necessaries of an intimate nature, but most of all I am attracted by the name, hanging in flourishing letters on the sign board outside. The owner bears my own surname. He is called Charles Debrot. It is not the first time that I have stood in front of this shop; I wait until a client enters and draws the shop keeper out of his hiding place. He interests me strongly because of our common surname, evidently we both descend from Adam and Eve Debrot. In the second half of the 18th century my forefather, who was called Isaac Debrot (an apostate Calvinist of course) left Neuchâtel to seek his fortune in the colonies. On my father's side I am of Swiss origin. The front door opens with a warning bell (as they do in Holland). Watch, if you wait a moment we can get a look at Charles Debrot again. I am not interested in the client or the bathroom fixtures, I am only interested in the shop keeper, the member of my family. He is a small melancholy plumber. He combines lead poison with the fatigue of the ‘citoyen de Genève’. He casts a searching glance through the window, he has recognized me, my presence on the other side of his display has once before

awakened his curiosity; he has not recognized a member of the family, he only wonders what the indefinable stranger can have up his sleeve. He is surely not Swiss he thinks, though he could well be, but of an unusual type. Jean Jacques Rousseau also looked at times like an Armenian. Complete certainty can after all not be provided. In the long run Calvin sowed confusion rather than shaped order. I could try to answer his questions, but I am no Jean Calvin, I give profuse thanks for the chance not to cause more confusion. On my father's side I am French Swiss, on my mother's side the Spanish temperament predominates. I have a secret, that I only confide to others under very exceptional circumstances. I vacillate between Swiss moroseness and Iberian anarchy. I am, in terms of the automobile salesmen, an hispano-suiza, a much too exceptional combination for finding a solution without having a large fortune or being exceptionally fortunate. Up to now I have enjoyed a certain measure of fortunateness, a fortune of any significance I have always lacked. I decide not to bother my kinsman any longer and continue my walk homewards (or only hotelwards?). As a matter of fact I have only to walk through two empty streets, at right angles, and I am already standing before the porter's desk. E. has left a note for me, she has gone to do some errands, women mean practically everything with this term, and will be back in a few minutes.

The elevator carries me to the third floor, where I live for this month. I turn the key in the lock and open the door of room no... I undergo a surprise and remain standing on the threshold. A transformation has taken place in the room. It is no longer part of a hotel, it has become a ‘home’. Sooner or later E. always manages to metamorphose even the most banal cubby-hole of a hotel room into a home. The rancid hotel

lodging is changed into an intimate bedroom. It is an oblong room, characterized by me during its rancid lodging period as a cubby-hole, with a wide window on one of the short sides. The heads of the beds are standing against the wall of the longer left side. Between the window and E.'s bed is the dressing table with toilet articles, some belletristic books and a slender silver vase containing pink and lavender sweet-peas. Above the bed I see the photo of our fourteen year old daughter, with her clear light eyes under dark hair. The light eyes come from Neuchâtel, their clear look descends from Toledo, the straight hair is probably of Indian origin. Between the other bed and the short side where the door is, my aluminum booktrunk stands against the wall. Aluminum made of bauxite from Surinam. The small table next to my bed is crowded with books, the reading lamp is pushed to the side; I have learned gradually that it is necessary to take very many books with me when I travel if I would remain calm. How did Benjamin Constant say it again? ‘Charlotte, Charlotte, et des livres.’ To begin with I must have room for the Conference documents. The ILO produces more pamphlets than I have ever seen for the preparation of a Conference. You absolutely must have these documents, at least if you do not intend to sit mum. It is remarkable how much the Latin Americans like to sit mum. Perhaps they are happy people, created for dolce far niente, the lovely doing of nothing at all. ‘And do you know why I don't do a darn’, a Latin American asked me recently. ‘Porque no me de la gana!’ In other words he does not give a hang! Then I must have room for works about Switzerland and Swiss authors. That is a requisite of diplomatic courtesy, especially if you bear a Swiss name and are related to Swiss neurologists, plumbers and high-class barbers. Finally I need room for the

numerous books of verse, that I turn to as a therapy for my Swiss misanthropic and Spanish anarchistic complexity of emotions. I dislike pseudonyms, otherwise I would commit plagiarism and in future sign myself as Maldoror II. It is not easy to defend oneself against misanthropy and melancholy. I remain standing at the door in a stupefaction of intimacy. What is it that is special about the metamorphosis. The sphere of which the objects become a part? The interchange of light and dark? The smell of being home which is wafted to me? It would be useless to try to give answers to these and a number of other questions concerning the same things.

17.6.1956.

Have had this week repeatedly contact with the Russians. Political, artistic, religious (sic).

First Contact. Of a distinctly Soviet political nature. Reception given by the Soviet Delegation in Hotel Metropole (Rive Gauche). Colonial participants invited in large numbers and present in large numbers. Contact with the younger peoples should be promoted in every possible way. Truc à la Russe.

The smile à la Russe in this company is only worn when in conversation with African representatives of a pronounced dark tint (violet-black). The Soviet Russians possess the formality of the middle-classes and the tenseness of the fanatic. Their look alternates between scrutinizing, then they want to do business, and staring in the distance, then they discern a future for others still enveloped in mist. Arutiunian, the leader of the Russian delegation, is a small dark man, who walks with firm steps, his arms held away from his body. He is a man of muscular tension with at times, on his face, the expression of injury born of resentment. The Russians form a nucleus of

terrible Ivans around which the guests move with the meekness of satelites. The Arabians are the most outstanding in the way of resentment, they exceed all bounds; I would like to meet an Arabian who could give me a finely detailed explanation for this. The negroes have much less resentment and besides their resentment has more nuances and is in some respects even amusing with its suavity. A representative from Barbados, as black as is seldom seen, winks at me. He has seen through the 'truc à la Russe'. I wink back, with the result that a few moments later we are carrying on a conversation about the international situation in general.

The strongest form of meekness is excercised by the intellectual pro-communists from Western Europe, who are more than willing to add their approval to the callousness of Stalin and Beria as well as to the drollery of K. and B. They are intellectual grubbers. A grubber-intellectual confides in me that he has only come for the vodka and caviar; he offers me a vodka, that I accept eagerly though not without calling his attention to the fact that it is hardly the place or the time to make discourteous remarks about the Soviet. He ignores this and tells me how many drops of lemmon to put on my caviar to give it the most delicious taste. The western representatives thread their way among the communists and the pro's more as observers than as guests. I have not completely given up hope for the Russians. The Russian will never be a common middle-class man. Emphasis on the common. He is much too vital for that.

Second Contact. Musical event of the year in Geneva. The Leningrad Philharmonic orchestra with the famous conductor Mravinsky. He has been decorated with the Stalin order. The Victoria Hall is sold out to the last seat. With much difficulty

we succeeded in getting places on the stage behind the orchestra. This has its good sides, we can look straight in the face of the conductor. He is a tall blond man around fifty with a long face, pronouncedly dolichocephalic, with sparse hair. The mephistopholes type. Soon one recognizes in him the artistic arrivé. He conducts especially with his eyebrows, which are raised on the right side, on the left or drawn together in an ominous frown. In a moment of trance his head is thrown back, his eyes closed and this attitude is accompanied by a loud dicking of the tongue against the roof of his mouth. I realize suddenly, Mravinsky makes me think of Hans Heinz Ewers, whom I once heard lecture during my first year at college in Utrecht. The orchestra plays Tchaikovsky and Schostakovitch. The latter has also been given the Stalin order. The music is a continual variation between vigour and inebriation. Without a doubt we have virtuosi before us, but the performance is calculated too much on effect for my taste. An inebriated mephisto, pardon me!

Third Contact. Russian Ballet. In the basement of the Palais des Nations artistic and documentary films from Rumania, the United States, the U.R.S.S. etc., are shown. Up to now I have only been able to see the ballet ‘Romeo and Julieta’ of Prokofiev. It is quite impressing. You could say that Russian art stands on the border of naturalism and mysticism. I have certain objections to choreography used as an illustration to a drama; it should be dramatic by its own means. Though that does not mean that at other moments I am not filled with admiration. Especially with the solo dances of Ulanova which, like clear melodies, rise above the orchestral group dances. Ulanova is, without a doubt, the greatest dancer since world war II. She possesses that rare combination of the dancer's

sadness and lucidity, weaned of all the annoying qualities of a certain type of prima ballerina. Her face shows apprehension, girlish and at the same time motherly.

Fourth Contact. June 17th, 11 o'clock a.m. We approach the miniature basilica (Greek orthodox). Basilique de pôche. A large cupola in the center with four smaller ones around it. The smaller cupolas look like reflections of the large one, while the large cupola in its turn looks like the reflection of a still larger one in a quite different world.

The interior, to begin with, is made up of the space under the large middle cupola, which is supported by slender pillars. In front of this is a space designated chiefly for the worshippers. Directly opposite the entrance and separated from it by the circular formed space under the middle cupola and the space for the worshippers, is the altar and space for the priests. The liturgy of the Greek orthodox church has much in common with the Roman Catholic mass, though it differs in so far that the two groups participating in the celebration: the priest and the worshippers, are more independent of one another. The priests who celebrate the liturgy are in a space apart, the holy space it could be called; they are separated from the worshippers, who occupy themselves individually during the liturgy with lighting candles before the icons. In the Roman Catholic church it is not the custom for worshippers to permit themselves these liberties.

Sometimes the bishop enters the circular space to recite a prayer or make the sign of the cross over the worshippers who then cross themselves super abundantly, The hands make flying movements to the face, breast and shoulders. The crosses of the worshippers look like reflections of the bishop's gestures. When the bishop withdraws it is quiet and empty for awhile in the

holy circle, but before long the worshippers again step forward and continue their inner contact with the icons; they kneel humbly, cross themselves, press their lips to the frame of the icon and finally light their candles which emphasizes the byzantine expression of the saints. Most of the worshippers are crowded back of the pillars. I see as many men as women among them, as many young as older people. This last fact is especially remarkable. The friendly faces are in the minority, although this House of God evidently does not evoke sullen expressions either. Most faces show the matter-of-fact look of emigrants, who have given up hope, but have nevertheless retained their belief. When a tall man in an English tweed suit, who has just kissed an icon turns around, I recognize Alexey Vsevolodovitch. He fixes his eyes on me with the cruel, ironic smile so typical for Russians of all political opinions. It seems to me that it is not the place for two former habitués of Montparnasse to meet again. Once more I assume the role of an apparition, I look with glassy inhuman eyes straight before me. He hesitates a moment and then continues his journey along the wall of icons with the long slender wax candles in his hand. A feeling of pity rises in me, he is probably an extremely lonesome man.

The Russians are closer to the young nations than the West Europeans. Of that I am certain. Probably because they, likewise, have achieved no more equilibrium. Marxism is for them a means of enforcing self-discipline. If they only enforce self-restraint, then discipline will, without a doubt, be missing. The result can then become a very sad affair indeed. With their bad conscience they will drive many of the younger nations to ruin. I think of the parable that Dostoyevsky used as motto for Demons: ‘Then went the devils out of the man, and entered

into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.' (St. Luke 8, 32-36).

18.6.1956.

A walk in the afternoon along the Grand'Rue. Full of charm. Jewelers, antique shops, book shops and intimate restaurants. We have been inside various shops and had rubies, emeralds and topazes shown to us. The jewelers sized us up out of the corners of their eyes, asking themselves if we could mean serious business. It all depends on what one understands by that. The emeralds especially were of a gorgeous depth, like some strips of sea on a tropical coast. The nearer to the cathedral you come the more pious the book shops, at least to judge from the windows. Various shops specialize in existential-theological works. Atheistic existentialism does not find much favour in the Grand'Rue. Heidegger and Sartre had better not try anything here, they would be put out immediately. Thus all the more demand for Christian existentialism. Take this book shop for example: three rows of Calvin, the same work in twenty languages. 'Institutio Religionis Christianae'. The English translation is called 'Introduction to Christian Religion'. I remember the last words of Calvin: *Praised be God*. Two rows of Karl Barth. I have been told recently that personalistic socialism did not originate with Denis de Rougemont, as is generally believed in some countries, but with Karl Barth. I shall probably never read Karl Barth, Protestant theologians give me the 'creeps' or simply migraine. With the exception of Søren Kierkegaard, who is also abundantly represented here. In 1922 Louis Dugas wrote a book of which the title alone justifies publication: 'Les Grands Timides'. Among these he counts Jean Jacques Rousseau, Benjamin

Constant, Stendhal, Chateaubriand, Mérimée. He has evidently limited himself to French authors, otherwise Kierkegaard would have fitted excellently in this group. In his method of seduction he uses all the suavities of feigned timidity, other kinds of seducers use other means. Ask the Italian Casanova (biological excitation), the Andalusian Don Juan (the humbug of passion), the Frenchman Valmont (intrigues of *perfidie et féerie)*, the English use the Platonic prescription. For Plato, Plato paves the way.

The musings before a window full of existential-theological works is broken by a fine drizzle. I look at my watch; it is 7 o'clock. Praised be God! We take refuge in the restaurant Plat d'Argent that advertises itself as having been established in the 17th century. It is a specimen of the restaurant de pôche, in which the limited space can offer as well intimacy as closeness.

The Swiss evidently like these small, crowded eating houses, the chalets 'Petite Suisse' in other parts of the world are also of this genre. I have a certain fear of them, I suffer at times from claustrophobia. Nevertheless it is very cozy to-night. The guests are mostly middle-aged (for the middle-aged who seek their diversions outside the home, as the advertisements might put it). They do not bother about others. A contrast to the meddlesomeness which makes cafés in Dutch towns insupportable places. The guests this evening are only concerned with themselves. I am an exception in this case, I have caught many bad habits from the Dutch: I listen to those around me and can follow various conversations. The Swiss are talking about the shopping they have done; about a new pastor, who, up to now, has shown his good sides, in his sermons as well as in his sick visits; still he must be watched, his youth warrants

that, after all youth is the time of capriciousness and sin: again and again the conversation turns to a city-councillor who is disappointing because of his insolence and instability, he seems to press towards friendship with the Russian satelites. ‘And between you and me’, the speaker bends forward with his hand before his mouth. He whispers, but I understand him clearly. He whispers, translated in English: ‘Between you and me and let it go no further, perhaps he *has* got *syphilis*’. A few tables away on the other side is sitting the journalist of the better classes whom I have already seen in the Salle des Pas Perdus, also this time accompanied by the woman with the two faces of Picasso. He himself has a Dutch face with ears that stand out and a slightly oriental profile. Dutch families owe a large part of their fortunes to the former Dutch East Indies and the West (meaning Surinam), their race mixture comes from these countries and not from the armies of Alva. Recently I made the acquaintance of a certain baroness of the languorous type; I would not come from the West if I could not recognize the race mixture at once. Something of the kind is meant when one hears about the ‘taint’ in a certain family in the Hague. How shocking, this family seems to have negro blood. Dear me, how will the Dutch patriciate get over such a blot. I tell you the revolution is near at hand, very near. How could it be otherwise. Negro blood in Dutch veins!

The journalist of good family must have done a service for the French at some time or other, he wears the ‘bouton’ of the Legion d'Honneur in his lapel. Though possibly it is only the replica of a real poppy-bud. At this moment he is reading the ‘Neue Zürcher Zeitung’ to his friend. It must be an old paper for he is reading about Eden's statement given at Norwich, concerning the conflict in Cyprus. He seems to be amused

with the English premier as well as with the German language. He imitates the hissing Prussian accent. I remember one of the last times I was with Menno Ter Braak. It was at the Italian restaurant Chez Eliza in the Hague. It must have been in April 1940, a few weeks before the German invasion. The restaurant seemed to be graced chiefly with a German dientele that evening. This highly irritated Ter Braak. Then he began imitating the Prussian accent, as the superjournalist is now doing. I can follow him word for word: 'Der Premier Minister erklärte weiter, es sei schon oft angeregt worden eine Nato basis auf griechischem Boden sollte für die britischen Bedürfnisse genügen... (unable to understand the next words)... Dem sei aber *nicht* so (repeated three times with undue emphasis on "dem")... Das Wohlergehen des Vereinigten Königreiches und des jenigen Westeuropas hängt heute ab von der Versorgung mit Oel aus dem mitteren Osten...'

The critical face of his partner is doomed to silence, the admiring one comes to life. Now the journalist has put the paper aside. He has started another subject. I cannot follow him, he is speaking with his mouth practically closed, while he is munching small pieces of bread between two courses. He is speaking in a muffled tone. It must be a dreadful subject. His friend becomes more and more critical. Finally she shows only one face. She observes her companion with a mounting astonishment that borders on antagonism. What subject has the super journalist now touched on? Formerly I could also hear whispering. Whisperings in the evening breeze were child's play, for me. I am growing older, my hair is getting grey, sorrow clouds my mental faculties, the sharpness of my hearing has diminished. What is the journalist with the poppy bud in his lapel saying? It dawns on me. He can no longer

contain himself. From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. He has turned to the Royal crisis. That will be the beginning of the end for him. Look out my good fellow. To-night you will find yourself out in the cold!

19.6.1956.

Periodic annual meetings show a similarity of aspect every year anew, which is also true of the I.L.O. Conferences. Every year the problems of working conditions and labour relations are discussed again. Labour relations in the broadest sense: relations between the State on the one hand and employers' and workers' organizations on the other; relations between labour and management and further, relations between man and machine. These discussions take place every year but every Conference has its own stamp, its specialité, that which distinguishes it from all the former years and from those to come. It is interrupted by an international conflict or a certain controversy assumes dimensions which are out of all proportion, or a particular event - an attempt at murder is committed on the chairman or secretary of the Conference - demands special attention. It is not yet certain whether this conference will end without a spectacular event, but I would be willing to assert that the 39th Conference of the International Labour Organization will remain known chiefly for its discussions in connection with the *Mc Nair Report*. Though here they are not called discussions, but exchange of views. Controversial associations are avoided as much as possible in controversial situations.

The Mc Nair Report is called in full ‘Report of the Committee on freedom of employers' and workers' organizations from government's domination and control’. The whole

problem is included in this formula. The International Labour Organization is governed by two principles, the principle of *universality* and the principle of *tripartism*. Universality can be traced throughout the history of the I.L.O. since it was established in 1919; it is a principle which stresses the desirability of the widest possible participation of all countries as members, irrespective of their constitutional structure. The only delegate, the Dutch employers' representative Mr. Fennema (faithful advocate of the genre Walline, in his turn faithful advocate of the snippy Snedden), who doubts this, has only shown that he is not very well informed on the history of the I.L.O. Tripartism, which is set down in so many words in art. 3 of the I.L.O. Constitution, holds that the member states shall participate according to the tripartite system, in other words, they shall send not only governmental delegates and their advisers but also employers' and workpeoples' delegates with their respective advisers, although a certain preponderance is given the governments since they are entitled to nominate two delegates, both with a right of vote as against one delegate for employers and one for workpeople each. One can only praise this principle to which, according to authorities on labour law, the I.L.O. owes its survival from the chaos of the second world war. It cannot be too highly valued. We are now faced with the problem whether these progressive principles are still pertinent to this organization, thus we are faced with an immense problem. In recent years i.e. since the admittance of the U.R.S.S. to the Organization (1954), the question has arisen, from which certain employers are chiefly tormented as by a creeping ailment, the predominant question, whether the tripartite system can be considered as operative for countries where the employers and workpeople cannot be

regarded as being free from state control. State control, it is among the phrases that in this connection is ‘gelassen ausgesprochen’, that is to say, in which not everyone understands the same thing. What is the difference between Stalin and Lieftinck or Krushchev and Van de Kieft, between state communism and socialism. The difference is clear enough prima facie, but how must the definition sound à tête reposée. Before forming an opinion about the tripartite principle under the present circumstances, another question should be answered, namely, what are the forms of state control existing at the present time. For this we have called upon Mr. Mc Nair, among others. To find an answer to the vexed question stated above, the Governing Body of this organization appointed a committee composed of three wise men who were required to prepare a report to be submitted to them at the earliest possible date. The three wise men to whom this request was made at the 128th Session of the Governing Body in March 1955 are: Sir Arnold D. Mc Nair, in the meantime promoted to Lord Mc Nair, former President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, former member of the Committee on the Application of International Labour Conventions; Senor don Pedro de Alba (without any resemblance or relationship to the ‘iron duke’), former President of the Senate of Mexico, and former representative of the Government of Mexico in the Governing Body of the International Labour Office; Mr. Justice A.R. Cornelius, Judge of the Federal Court of Pakistan, known for his capability and integrity, both of which qualities are always loudly acclaimed and always earnestly mistrusted. Lord Mc Nair was appointed chairman of this committee, for which reason the report, which has now been submitted to the Conference is called, in short, the Mc Nair Report. Thus, it is a

report concerning the freedom of employers' and workers' organizations from governmental control. The committee worked with exemplary speed and, during three sessions within the course of a year, carried out its task. The first session, held in Geneva in July 1955, should be regarded as the chief one, since then the decision was made as to the procedure to be adopted in preparing this report. It was in the first place seen to be impracticable to undertake an on-the-spot inquiry, not only because of the time available but because an on-the-spot inquiry would be highly dependant, in certain cases even predominantly dependant, on authorities on-the-spot. Equally, it was deemed impossible to undertake a full-scale examination based on the evidence from any source whatsoever; such an inquiry would mean a labyrinth which, in as far as it is traversable for the learned investigators would, in any case, offer no escape to the less learned delegates.

The report was based on information from the following three sources:

1) official information already obtained by the International Labour Office,
2) further information to be supplied by the governments of member states,
3) opinions offered by the most representative employers' and workers' organizations.

Concerning state participation, the committee has, in the main, divided its analysis into two groups of governmental activities.

I. The committee names inter alia the following governmental activities in connection with *industry*.

a) industry is a concession which is granted under certain conditions,

b) the administration of the industry is wholly or for a part in governmental hands,
c) the industry forms part of a welfare plan under supervision of the governmental department related to it,
d) the industry forms a part of state possessions, in capitalistic countries through shareholding, in communistic countries through the socialization of the instruments and means of production.

II. A second form of participation is determined by the relationship of the state towards the employers' and workers' organizations. Herewith the freedom of association, thus also the right of labour unions to organize, should be considered; the provisions for registration of these organizations; governmental intervention in electing committee functionaries; the forms of arbitration in labour disputes and finally, the regulation of collective labour conventions and the existence or non existence of a prohibition on strikes and lock-outs in the different countries belonging to the International Labour Organization.

The second and third sessions were held respectively in London in September 1955 and in January and February 1956 (at an unnamed place).

The exchange of views about the report took place on the 14th and 15th of this month at the plenary sitting, an exchange of views, which brought only disappointment for most people. According to some because the delegates did not have sufficient time to study the document which, together with the appendices, comprises 2000 stenciled pages. According to others, who gave a less favourable opinion of the Conference, because the I.L.O. delegates are degenerating steadily into the ignorant-arrogant-intrigant type of politician and consequently

will not let themselves be told anything by wise men.

The social conscience goes on speaking, notwithstanding the degenerate delegates. In the lobbies the problems that the three wise gentlemen, among whom a freshly dubbed lord, have raised, are being discussed continually. The exchange of views only becomes lively in the lobbies. See how they orate and perorate. There go the Messrs. Snedden, Walline and Fennema, snippy gentlemen who call themselves employers but who, in reality, are well-dressed, well-spoken employers' defenders with the consummate disdain that usually distinguishes these gentlemen. There go the comrades from behind the iron curtain, Arutiunian, Surguchef and Solovjof, displaying the hefty-legged rancor with which they try to solve weighty problems, to the great amusement of the Genevan demi-monde. Their speciality is to be sought in the cutting of Genevan knots! There go the delegates of India, representatives of hypocrisy, with the floating gestures and injured voices that are so well suited to the narrow-fitting white jodhpurs and long black jackets. I am very lucky. I am now walking next to Mr. Corneille Edoh-Coffi, one of the few people at this Conference for whom you can cherish an unreserved appreciation, apart from the rightness or wrongness of his opinions! Who shall decide about that? And at this perilous moment in the history of the world! Who can allow himself time for that? How can I study documents of 2000 pages if I must also worry about the rightness of opinions in the lobbies? Do not make me laugh! The devil. I prefer to enjoy the company of Monsieur Corneille Edoh-Coffi. He is a thoroughbred bastard. Rather a nice jeu de mot on my part! A thoroughbred bastard! I think that the future of the world will have to flourish on bastards. I have proclaimed this view once before in a light comedy in seven

dialogues, but permit me to repeat it now in my diary in the solemn serious loneliness of night time. Monsieur Corneille Edoh-Coffi is a choice bastard, a flower among bastards, one has only to listen to the name to realize that. With Corneille, something of the French civilization has been passed on to him, but he lacks all the grimness of the French poet. For that, he is too close to the other part of his name, which still smells of the coffee plantations. He is a small, slender mulatto, with a round face with a thin mustache, that gives something debonair, something fin-de-siècle to his appearance. He comes from Dahomey. I see his native land before me on the map. It lies between Togo and Nigeria below the hump of West Africa. He is one of the technical advisers to the French workers' delegate of the Conference. He is the head secretary of the united railway employees, affiliated to the Federation of Christian Workers in Dahomey. He is proud of his function, that you can see, after all not everyone is the head secretary of a labour organization; you can also see that he doesn't give a hang, after all he is a workers' delegate, who has to rub it in to 'them', with the full knowledge that 'they' will pay him back if once they get the chance. 'Did you sleep well, Monsieur Debrot?' Mr. Edoh-Coffi begins the conversation.

'No,' I answer, 'I have been reflecting on the Mc Nair report the whole night.'

He has to laugh heartily, but becomes serious again at once and gives an extensive argumentation about the exchange of views which have been going on for some days. What strikes me most is that he agrees and at the same time disagrees with everyone. And I must say I have to coincide with this standpoint then and there. I have never yet met anyone who has not been both right and wrong at the same time. That is true of

philosophers of the Kantian-Hegelian-Sartrian genre but also of politicians of the ignorant-arrogant-intrigant type. It is true of both Chambers of Parliament at The Hague. It is also true of the General assembly in New York or Geneva or at the public party meetings in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao.

I listen attentively to the words of my so gracefully mustached friend, who doesn't care a hang. ‘Monsieur Debrot (he pronounces my name with a French accent as if he repeatedly wishes to express his wonder that I should belong to another than the French nation)... Monsieur Debrot... Of course I cannot do otherwise than agree completely with the employers. The Kremlin comrades have concentrated all power in the hands of the party, they have paralyzed the human being. The employers are right, the Kremlin has paralyzed the human being. But fairness demands that we also look at the wrong side of the employers. We must announce it from the roof tops. Mind you! From the roof tops! The employers do not have the interest of the workers at heart. Will you maintain that Monsieur Walline and his kind look after the interest of the workers? A child could not be fooled by it. They look exclusively after their private incomes, their profits, their dividends, their interest, their stocks, their coupon scissors or any other symbol you like. The symbol in this case does not interest me, not in the least. Mind you! Pardon the English that I throw in, it is like that in the colonies and former colonies, English is getting priority, it will become the world language. Tant pis pour nous, Monsieur Debrot... They are shareholders, the employers, even when, for the rest, they can be counted among the decent people. They become vitally dangerous, quite vitally dangerous if one stretches a hand towards their shares. Par exemple, your prime minister, I mean

the Dutch prime minister in The Hague. A thoroughly decent person, even a socialist! Yet he set loose the police action in Indonesia. Mollet does the same in Algiers, he is also a socialist and a fellow of modest origin without pretensions as well. Take Eden, for example, from better circles but without a doubt not less decent than Mr. Mollet or your prime minister and yet he declares openly that the English oil interests demand that the Cypriots ideal of independance should be nipped in the bud. The employers are vitally dangerous if a hand is laid on their money. However that does not mean that I'll let myself be tempted by the communistic viewpoint, - I'll be damned if I will -, even though they fill all coloured people full of vodka and spread them with caviar (he licks his lips at the thought of these delicacies). The Kremlin comrades are right of course when they assert that their employers, their managers and their workers, despite all of the state control, can make an important contribution to the exchange of views of the International Labour Organization. The problem now is not concerned with the preservation of labour peace, as it was thirty years ago, but with the improvement of labour conditions and relations, which are important in every country. Is there anyone in the world who can deny something so obvious? I know, the world is an insane asylum, but even in an insane asylum this truth is no longer denied (his comparison of society with an insane asylum, where certain truths are no longer denied, seems to amuse him immensely). But as I have already said, I cannot be tempted by the communistic ideology. This ideology emanates trom collectivity and not from the human being. A monstrous idea, a distorted, false doctrine. It is the human being who lives and dies, not collectivity. Collectivity can behave with or without animation, but it is the human

being who has a soul. In that sense I can agree with Mr. Tripathi of India, who believes that the worker is of prime importance and not the legalistic exchange of views about labour conventions, which may or may not be considered for amendments and ratifications.

Mr. Edoh-Coffi speaks without raising his voice; even when the subject lends itself to that, he does not raise it. An unusual characteristic for a coloured person. He must certainly have practiced to acquire it! The art of understatement, the art of simple words. Instead of raising his voice he starts to beam. Then with his sparse mustache, he looks a little like a sly cat. I like him very much.

I feel I must interrupt him. I once heard a speech by Krishna Menon in New York, one could also say witnessed it. It gave me an uncomfortable feeling in the stomach regions. Mr. Tripathi also goes far in the way of hypocrisy. I often agree word for word with Mr. Tripathi's opinions, but his gestures and diction simply nauseate me physically (la nausée internationale, I call that nowadays).

'Monsieur Corneille, pardon Monsieur Edoh-Coffi' (Corneille is his given name). Bastards frequently have grand first names (Zola, Achille, Rainbow, Nonplusultra...)

He beams: 'Ça n'a pas aucune importance. Continuez s.v.p....'

'Well, then, Monsieur Edoh-Coffi, I have no confidence in Mr. Tripathi's words. They are delusions.'

'I would dislike accusing Mr. Tripathi directly of not having virtuous aims, but still he makes a serious mistake.'

'I would like to hear from you what that is.'

He strokes his thin mustache with an elegant French gesture, and gives a definition of the Indian delegate's mistake.

‘The human being is of prime importance and not the worker. The human being is always of prime importance and not a certain capacity of the human being.’

‘We can only help the human being in one of his capacities and not as such,’ I put in.

‘C'est parfaitement exacte. But the last word for the Christian is not to be spoken by the International Labour Organization, but by the Oecumenical Church.’

‘You mean that man cannot be helped by social measures only.’

‘I believe that throughout history religion has been repeatedly misused but I believe that certain answers can only be given by religion.’

‘The answer to the final questions, you mean.’

‘Yes, if only one sees, that the final questions are already contained in the first.’

‘I believe you are right,’ I answer in English, because of a feeling of embarrasment perhaps.

Nevertheless he corrects me: ‘I believe I am *quite* right’.

I repeat his words, more out of sympathy than that I really share his opinions in *all* respects: ‘Of course, I believe you are quite right’.

From the distance another colored man of the muscular English type, with multi-colored silk draperies beckons to him. He takes leave of me with a pat on the shoulder: ‘Au revoir, Monsieur Debrot...’ And he smiles, not without shyness, as if he would recommend to me a certain degree of lightheartedness, despite the bitter earnestness of this historic moment.

20.6.1956.

I get off the bus at the square in front of the station

(Cornavin station). I want to walk on but am stopped. I feel a man in a grey tweed jacket staring at me from the café terrace. I walk up to him.

'Sit down,' he says, as if we were still living in Montparnasse anno 1930.

'With pleasure.' I answer and sit down on a chair at the round iron table.

I ask what he will have. He takes a glass of milk and asks for some salt with it. I order a beer (demi-blonde).

'You can play the part of a ghost admirably,' he laughs in a tone, that sounds very much freer than formerly.

'Yes,' I answer, 'I've learned that with the years. I have had to live in such different countries and move in such different milieus, that I've learned to avoid certain problems and certain people.'

He mimics my voice: 'Problems and people and not people with their problems'.

I continue: 'It would take too much time to renew old contacts. I am quite experienced in the rôle of a ghost.'

He laughs: 'Human contact demands much time and even more energy of the soul' (literally 'une forte énergie d'âme').

He laughs again: 'Yes, yes, the rôle of ghost. My rôle has more the character of a ghostly nitchevo. I had enough talent to succeed as an artist, but not enough talent to be an artist and a human being at the same time. Therefore I gave up the artist. I am under the impression that, to a certain extent (à un certain degré) I am beginning to succeed as a human being. Life acquires a certain transparency, now I see it from inside, not, as formerly from the outside. I have had to give up my ambition for it. It did not go with me.'

'Don't you draw any more then?'

‘Very seldom. And then only to tempt a well-kept or rich lady into my chaste bed.’

‘God will forgive you, no doubt,’ I riposte alluding to our meeting in the miniature basilica (église de pôche). He does not laugh. It is without the slightest sign of cynicism that he ends the conversation: ‘Why should God bother about our idiosyncrasies. He judges us according to our transparency.’

I ask him a few questions about the surroundings of Geneva. He can tell me precisely the visiting hours of the various places worth seeing.

Finally we sit before empty glasses. We take leave of one another.

‘Shall we make another appointment,’ I suggest.

‘Let's leave it to chance,’ he answers.

‘Do svidánya, Alexey Vsevolodovitch.’

‘Do svidánya, Nikolai Ivanovitch.’

He is the only person who ever called me by this name.

21.6.1956.

It was in the columns of one of the many newspapers I devour, that I accidentally learned of the existence of Louis Dugas' book about the ‘Grands Timides’. There is an advantage in reading more newspapers than is strictly necessary. I asked immediately at a book shop about the advent of Dugas' book. The pretty sales girl with her Houbigant scent, told me that it was published in 1922, that it had already been sold out for some time and, as all really good books, was not being considered for reprinting (she smiled and with it the exhalation of Houbigant scent increased), but offered to make an effort to procure the book for me second hand. In so much Houbigant scent I could hardly do otherwise than show my mischievous

side, for which reason I remarked subtly, that I was not yet at the second hand phase but that I still moved under the sign of ‘Vient de paraître’, of ‘Virgo’.

On the street I murmured a few lines of Apollinaire ‘tendre comme le souvenir’.

> Tandis que nous n'y sommes pas
> les jeunes filles deviennent belles -

Between us, I do not need Dugas' book at all. I know more than enough about it. It is among the books that derive their raison d'être already from their titles. Les grands timides! I would like to say ‘Victims of Diffidence’, a nice, but quite incorrect translation. The artists who are dominated by timidity are not, by a long way, all victims of diffidence. I know still more about Dugas' book, the literary chronicler also told in passing, that it was concerned with the following authors: Jean Jacques Rousseau, Benjamin Constant, Stendhal, Chateaubriand and Mérimée. If the intention was to keep to French literature, then the choice could not have been better. Also the sequence deserves praise! Jean Jacques is the only victim of diffidence, the other four found their way through it. Jean Jacques could be called the ‘victime’, the other four the ‘débrouillards’ of diffidence.

You can be respected as a capable bank director or as an accomplished burglar and lack every kind of diffidence, shyness, bashfullness, to be short, timidity, but you cannot be an artist without knowing something of these. Every artist knows diffidence but not every artist is dominated by it. The diffident person has more annoyance from a split personality than his happier brothers, he exists of two persons: the one who acts, and the other who looks on, with the necessary lucidity. The

one who acts does not need to be afflicted with histrionic qualities at all but generally he shows dramatic or spectacular traits. Rousseau is a world reformer, Chateaubriand is a shield-bearer of Christianity, Stendhal is an impassioned lover, Mérimée has gone in for adventure and Benjamin Constant is among the individuals who are always tied up in a knot. Another peculiarity of the timid person is, that the actor reacts on the spectator, who sees through the dramatic qualities of his double self, by using all means at his disposal to mask his real nature. Just look into the history of the timid ones and very soon you will be aware of two unusual talents; a sharp, psychological intuition and alongside it, an unusual talent for mystification.

Dugas' choice is excellent, and also his sequence, at least if it is arranged according to the seriousness of the case. The victim always comes first, when he has once made the sacrifice of his life. Mérimée is, without a doubt, the most social among these five. His polished style, with a tendency for understatement which borders on frigidity, betrays directly the diffident person, but his is not a serious case; he lives in the adventurous sphere of vendetta, banderilla and tarantella, where there is plenty of dagger stabbing, but none that reaches Monsieur Mérimée's own heart. He is a capable chairman of a committee for the care of monuments, in any case he has safeguarded himself. With Chateaubriand it is quite different. He is the prototype of the ‘timide réactionaire’, he masks his real nature, that of an extremely sensitive half religious, half aesthetic personality not by understatement of the tempered word, but by weightiness: overstatement of the legitimistic dogmas and doctrines. Stendhal is in many respects the opposite of Chateaubriand, he represents the most lovable expression

of the most lovable emotion. He is preeminently the man of the simple word. He did not cultivate the frigidity of his friend Mérimée, he lacked the opressiveness of departmental officials and had a predilection for the laxity of morals and warmth of heart, which he believed especially to have found in his second fatherland, Italy. He is, in any case, far from being a victim of timidity. The actor does not let himself be paralyzed, by the spectator.

The real tragedy of timidity begins with Benjamin Constant, the well known Swiss who, as is known, was not very proud of being Swiss. There are many passages in his diaries, letters and novels (Adolphe and Cécile) that offer proof, that the actor in this photophobic albino was mesmerized by the look of his double self, which restrained him from certain actions but which, through his hysterical short-circuits also incited him to the exageration of other actions. There are moments in Constant's life, that only crop up in serious cases of timidity. Examples of these monstrous short-circuits are the suicidal attempts in Paris and at the castle of Mézery with the aim of capturing the love respectively of Mlle Pourat and Mme de Stael. In the second case he succeeded too! He was, no doubt, not lacking in certain scampish qualities which are so highly regarded by certain ladies of the higher circles.

'Throw the fellow out of the window,' is how the Count de Montmorency seems to have reacted when told in the silence of midnight about the love-struck intellectual's attempt at suicide.

The real tragedy of timidity, with all of its profoundly sad consequences takes place with Rousseau, le pauvre Jean Jacques. In certain biographies about Jean Jacques Rousseau a sharp line of division is drawn between the period of 'La Nouvelle Héloise', 'Le Contrat Social' and 'Emile' and the

period in which the ‘Confessions’ were written. This line of division certainly exists but it is less essential and also less pathological than is generally represented. In all of Rousseau's works an effort to create a harmonious unity between his personal longings and social duties can be seen. In the first three here mentioned he was able to mask the radical element from his longings by moderating the revolutionary element (by mitigating it, as we would now say). That happens in the ‘Nouvelle Héloise’, where he pretends to accept the marriage laws of the eighteenth century. It happens in ‘Emile’, where, after all, he also preaches a stoicism which should even be prepared to accept the ‘lettres de cachets’, and in the ‘Contrat Social’, where the doctrine of freedom, which should be given up for the sake of gaining a still loftier freedom keeps a back door open for the despotism of Versailles. In this respect the ‘Confessions’ form a drastic contrast to the works which were written before the ‘Lettre de la Montagne’. The ‘Confessions’ should be read as a novel that deals with the complot of Voltaire and his kind against J.J. Rousseau, or better still, the world of the eighteenth century against the day-dream, castle-building world of Rousseau. The ‘Confessions’, read in the only manner that it should be read, thus as a novel, appears to be nothing less than the French eighteenth century precursor of Kafka's ‘Process’. The events of 1789 proved Rousseau to have been right: these two worlds, the eighteenth century of Voltaire and the dream world of Rousseau, could not be considered for peaceful co-existence.

In the Netherlands the timid type is rare. Holland is not a country of timidity, but of intimacy. The fatherland of timidity must be sought in Switzerland. It might be identical with la Suisse Romande.

22.6.1956.

In the ‘Mémoires d'un Touriste’, procurable at the moment in an inexpensive edition of Calman Levy, Stendhal wrote as follows about Jean Jacques Rousseau:

At last it is given me to see this beautiful lake again, so vast, so magnificently enclosed by its surroundings. The ideas it awakens in you are less pondrous, less sublime perhaps, but more tender than those of the real sea. It was Rousseau who gave *his lake* its reputation, and this great man is still misprized or depreciated in most of the lovely villages I can see on its shores in the distance. In Savoy they ignore even his name. In the Swiss villages he is reviled every day, and I am glad for him. In the interest of this great man who is dead, it is better that he is despised. The more unjust the feelings toward him, the longer his fame will endure. The name of Macchiavelli will probably last longer than that of Montesquieu, though their merits were equal; but Macchiavelli has to his advantage the furious hatred of the rascals, whom Montesquieu took the trouble to manage. Besides that Montesquieu died a rich man while the other died in extreme poverty.

As always in Geneva, I begin with going to the Promenade Saint Antoine for a view of the lake. From there I wander through the town and before calling for my letters and attending to my affairs, I visit the house where Jean Jacques Rousseau was born in 1712. It has recently been restored; it looks now like one of the six-story buildings which are of late marring the beauty of Paris. But I am consoled with the thought that I have so often been in the little room with the projecting beams, where Jean Jacques Rousseau was born. Once I found living in it a poor watchmaker, who had the

complete works of Rousseau in a bad edition and who had understood the contents. We talked for an hour about the 'Contrat Social', the principle merit of which, according to me, is to be found in its title. In general, you could say, the workers in Geneva can follow a kind of reasoning, which in France would seem far beyond the scope of their class; but on the other hand, they would never show so much enthusiasm for the 'Gamin de Paris' or for the admirable Bouffé, as the young workers who sit in the cheap seats of the 'Gymnase' do. To foreigners, especially foreigners of the better classes, the Genevan workers are a source of annoyance: they are never obsequious.

I go to pay my respects to the statue of Rousseau on the little island, half way across the new bridge. It is the first time I see it; all honour to Mr. Pradier, Genevan sculptor! He has eyes for the antique but he also has eyes for nature; among the contemporary sculptors, he is the man who can best make a leg or an arm. If his statues should be broken in pieces and buried and found as fragments one day, it would be difficult to know what century they belonged to, but they would find a place of honour in some museum or other.

The statue of 'Jean Jacques', as the people of Geneva call him, is about eight feet high. The head is very impressing and seen from the front the whole figure is effective. Jean Jacques sits facing the lake that was so dear to him. How happy it would have made him to know that once a statue of him would be erected in his fatherland, that he believed so ungrateful, and that it would be placed where it was!

Rousseau is seated, with a pencil in his hand; he is absorbed in some thought that he is on the point of writing down; in his left hand he holds a tablet which rests on his knee. His

attitude, inspired by the ‘Confessions’, is that of a man who has jumped out of his bed to write down an idea which is tormenting him. The top part of the figure is barely covered by a shirt. The pedestal was only completed recently. They used for it one of those enormous blocks of granite, washed down by the waters from the near-by Alps, from where, exactly, no one knows; polished and shining, it is of a pleasant grey tone.

While I stood considering this statue, a passer-by stopped; I started a conversation with him.

‘Monsieur,’ he said, ‘on the 28th of June there was a celebration for Jean Jacques, the anniversary of his birth-day. It was a fête for the children; it began with a procession of about two thousand boys and girls, who paraded before the house where he was born. Afterwards they walked down to the lake and came here where they placed the flowers they had been carrying at the foot of the statue. You can imagine, Monsieur, that this fête was not organized by the government though they put no obstacle in its way; this year they even authorized three companies of the national militia to accompany the immense file of two thousand children! It goes without saying that among them were no children belonging to those “messieurs du haut” (as the wealthy people who reside at the top of the town on and near the Promenade de la Treille are called). It is the simple folk who celebrate the anniversary of the man who makes our fatherland famous.

None belonging to the elite who reside on the Promenade de la Treille can have much liking for this great man, though they are careful not to show it openly. The simple folk, who know the attitude of these people, honour Rousseau especially to show that they do not partake of these feelings!

After taking leave of this good man, a worker who had

apparently risen in the world, I took a ferry boat and with the stub of a pencil, wrote down his words, which I have just given literally. I appreciate this recital far more than all those I have heard at official dinners.'

So much for Stendhal. The tourist of to day should also make a pilgrimage to the statue of Rousseau on the tiny island, now called l'Isle de Jean Jacques Rousseau. Further information can be found in the Guide Bleu.

23.6.1956.

We have come to the final phase of the work assigned to the Committee on the Application of the Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization, called briefly Committee for the Conventions and Recommendations. I participate in this Committee as a member of the delegation of the Netherlands government and have therefore been present at the greater part of the fourteen sittings which are mostly held in the morning though a few times are continued through the whole day. At the present time I have not the slightest objection to these humdrum jobs; the proposals of the 'maîtres de plaisir', to take a boat cruise on the lake in the company of a hundred persons, a bus trip to the snowy flanks of the Alps or a slightly tipsy visit to the night clubs seem to me, if that is possible, still more humdrum. Well, then, the Committee for Conventions and Recommendations. This Committee was set up in accordance with article 7 of the Standing Orders of the Conference, to consider and report on item III of its agenda, which reads: 'Information and Reports on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations'.

The work undertaken by this Committee was prepared

previously by a Committee of Experts. Without this it would have been next to impossible for a Committee of more or less quick-tempered politicians to complete the work satisfactorily, especially if one takes into account the pronounced nihilistic, in some cases even destructive, character of a large number of present-day statesmen. What was it Richard III said? Macchiavelli is certainly an angel compared to many of these gentlemen.

Most of the committee rooms in the Palais des Nations are darker than would be expected in this month, possibly because it is a cold, rainy summer. The climate of Geneva is only attractive in sunny weather; when the clouds are low, one comes directly into contact with the icy flanks of the Mont Blanc. Especially the representatives from the Overseas Territories walk around shivering visibly. Room XIV where our Committee gathers is among the darkest in the building, it is situated in the basement. You can visualize such a room as follows: a long oblong space with in the middle, three rows of tables running parallel to each other; between the rows of tables the necessary aisles are left open for passage. In the middle row sit the Government representatives. The row to the right (right as seen from the Officers' table, which is placed in front of the room at right angles to the three tables of the delegates) is occupied by the employers and the row to the left by the workpeople. The officers' table is on a slightly raised platform, separated from the committee members by a balustered gate. The purpose of this gate could hardly be fathomed by the greatest philosopher after the deepest reflection, unless it might be to symbolize the objectivity of the officers and the desire not to be bound by any ‘rules of the game’ on the part of the Committee members. Behind the raised platform, at a

still higher level are five closed glass cells, where some ladies with ear phones are acting rather showily and, to the naked eye, look as if they are talking inaudibly; it brings to mind a ‘red-light district’, but they are the simultaneous interpreters who ornament international conferences. In this Committee translations are made in five languages: French, English, Spanish, German and Russian. It is a pleasant diversion to follow the actions of these simultaneous interpreters behind the glass; they are mostly in couples. The work requires such mental exertion that it can only be carried on for a few minutes at a time, they must continually relieve each other. It is remarkable how many smart women are to be found among the simultaneous interpreters, physically smart I mean, but there are also the less smart kind among them, the so-so kind, destined for a modest middle-class marriage, and also a few monstrously ugly ones who, strangely enough, mirabile dictu I mean in latin, exercise an extraordinary attraction on the clergymen or former clergymen among the delegates. This is a specialty of ugly women, but then they must be monstrously ugly. It has always surprised me that a thesis has never been written on this subject; I shall mention it to Dr. van Lennep, professor of psychology in Utrecht. He is always interested in bringing up something out of the ordinary (I jot it down in my notebook but of course, won't be able to find it after a couple of days).

In the back of the room is a public gallery, also separated from the members by a railing which, in this case, does not lack significance. The gallery is mostly not very full. A few professors of international law; a few stray visitors who stare there eyes out; a few ladies who enjoy the big performances of their husbands and other bed-fellows. Between the railing and the delegates' seats a space is left open for tables with

documents and some young women with existential hairdos and pert, pointed nipples, who are given charge of the documents which may be of use during these discussions, full of pinches and jams.

> Rêvons toujours, ça coûte rien,
> le bout d'un téton dans les dents -

At the officers' table sits the chairman, Mr. Bar-Niv, Government delegate of Israel, a small, pale intellectual who does not have much difficulty in conducting the sittings, he is clearly a man of experience who, during the pauses reflects on the problems of his country, not only the problems of the Middle-East but also the conflicts between the Zionists, who beckon all Jews to Palestine and the Judaists, who advise all Jews against such a serious step. At his left sits Mr. Posteraro, Italian delegate, who was chosen as reporter, a slender, poetical man who also follows the discussion with ease and when it breaks off, continues reading a book which seems to interest him greatly. During one of the pauses I cannot resist asking him the title of the book.

'Il Diavolo' of Giovanni Papini.

'A suitable book for these surroundings', I remark.

'It has been placed on the index', Signor Posteraro assures me, very proud that he does not favor sentimental-conventional authors.

'On the index?' I ask, 'and I thought that Mr. Papini was in the good graces of the Holy Office.'

'That was so formerly, but since the publication of "Il Diavolo" he is regarded as extremely dangerous...'

'...and so he placed on the index.'

Signor Posteraro looks at me with large sad eyes: ‘Giovanni Papini wants to convert the devil...’

‘...and the church believes that the fallen angel must burn for all eternity.’

Our conversation is broken off. This is not a place for poetical confidences.

On the right side of the chairman, Mr. Bar-Niv of Israel, sit the functionaries of the Labour Bureau, to help the officers and the committee. They include the representative of the Director General, assisted by the political and juridical secretaries. The political secretary is an ‘ever-smiling’ American who seeks a compromise under all circumstances, the juridical secretary, on the contrary, a serious young French intellectual, will not budge an inch from his ground. The representative of the Director General is an over-burdened Greek, who closes his eyes (literally, probably not figuratively) when the tragedy of the Cypriots is mentioned. The ability of these gentlemen is only equalled by their modesty. The Committee tables are occupied, with a few praiseworthy exceptions, by persons, whose aim seems to be to remain unnoticed. Circumstances, however, do not always permit this. If I close my eyes, the following persons stand out predominantly.

At the table of the Government Group. The Belgian member, of the blond, thick-set type, in whom the physical force of the countryman (West Flemish peasant) is blended with the byzantine bel-esprit of the intellectual; he has a tendency to give the discussions a ‘prolongement juridique’ or ‘philosophique’; a redhaired Englishman, who hides behind his Oxford accent, his thick glasses and his luxuriant beard; a Frenchman, who lacks many good qualities of the French, answers unintelligibly, teeters back and forth as though he were still in

Kindergarten; a negro from Liberia, with his long, religious-shaped head clean shaven, who laughs at his own words; a stout lady from behind the Iron Curtain (I believe from Rumania), who reads long typed, common-place declarations in a quick tempo; Iberian representatives, who clothe distorted opinions in beautifully classical phrases; and lastly, the Dutch representative, an Antillian with sea-green eyes, whose expression varies between that of the attentive reporter and of the patient, who suffers from ideologic or neuralgic pains.

The *Workpeople's Group* is dominated by five persons, who are also five personalities. Mr. Cool, a heavy-set Belgian, of the union boss type, who interrupts at once, with his smooth-tongued, Flemish-toned French when the Government representatives try to evade the main issue with complicated trivialities (les balivernes). A Frenchman, with pronounced juridical talents, whose help is called in when the gentlemen try to screen themselves behind a legalistic net-work. Then we have a Brazilian representative, who turns Iberian phrases into plain language, after which all comments are superfluous. Monsieur Edoh-Coffi is also among the workers' group in this committee. He sits smiling into space, he had grown a silky beard for a few days; now that this has fallen under the gillette guillotine he contents himself with stroking his mustache. He is continually on the point of bursting into laughter at so much open insincerity on the part of the Government representatives. A little further away sits a negro with hollow temples, hollow cheeks, and long fingers that bend too far backwards when he supports his weary head. This weary negro has turned out to be the dread of the gentlemen of the Government delegations, though he only makes a very modest request of the chairman. ‘Mr. Chairman, I would be very much obliged if the Govern-

ment representative of..... would be so kind as to repeat his last statement.' Even for the most malafide official it seems to be awkward to repeat bold inaccuracies. One cannot become so hardened as not to retain something of childhood innocence.

The employers' group is represented practically by only one person, Mr. Bellingham Smith of the English employers' group. He is a personality such as one seldom finds at the Conference, especially in the circle of employers. He is an intelligent, lucid man, free from disdain and every other form of superficiallity. During the discussions he gave the Dominican delegate an unforgettably acrid quarter of an hour. Given in broad lines, the discussions proceeded as follows: First came the general debate which seemed to point to a general reconciliation. The various speakers pay a tribute to the Committee of Experts for the conscientious and painstaking work carried out by it which alone enabled this Committee to discharge its task in the comparatively short period of time at its disposal. To give only one example, it is no trivial task to study some 4,000 reports from the most widespread parts of the globe and to pick from these the salient, otherwise delicate, otherwise thorny points, to put before the Committee for deliberation. After this, again in a harmonious sphere (there is still not a trace of discord in the air), thanks is expressed for the help and assistance given by the International Labour Office which is already so over-taxed with administrative work. Especial mention is made in this connection of the fact that the office had found it possible this year to despatch typescript documents to the Governments at a comparatively early date, thus enabling them to study these far in advance of the opening of the session. The employers' group points out the importance of the participation of employers' and workers' organizations in the work of

the I.L.O. It is remembered that the Constitution requires governments to communicate to these representative organizations copies of the information and reports which they submit to the Director General of the International Labour Office. Mr. Cool is already raising his large Flemish index finger with a warning gesture to call the attention of the government delegates to the existence of Art. 23 Par. 2 of the I.L.O. Constitution. Mr. Bellingham Smith joins the warning and at the same time points out the absurdity of countries which ratify conventions but do not bring their national legislation into line with them. The government delegates retreat to a defensive position, mete out abundant praise to the official organizations and offer their special advice for assistance to young underdeveloped countries, by the study of international labour relations, the forming of an efficient method of labour inspection and translations of documents in the language of the country. After these reconnoitering manoevres the general debate was terminated and the special subjects taken up. These discussions are primarily concerned with the following matters:

1) Reports on ratified conventions.
2) Reports on ratified conventions in ‘non-metropolitan’ countries. At the present time the term ‘non-metropolitan’ means those countries who do not look after their own foreign affairs (i.e. who have no Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
3) Discrepencies between international and national legislation.
4) Participation of the employers' and workers' organizations in the work of the I.L.O.
5) The submitting of conventions accepted by the Conference to the competent authorities for ratification. For example,

the conventions would never be ratified by the Netherlands if not first submitted by the Government to Parliament.

6) The stand-point to be taken by the member-states concerning certain conventions, apart from whether or not they have ratified them, which are of fundamental importance to the harmonious development of labour relations and were especially recommended for this purpose by the preceding session of the Conference. At the present session the stand-point of the member-states as regards the Collective Bargaining Convention (C.A.O.) is being considered as well as the Equal Remuneration Convention.

The discussions chiefly take the form of questions that are put to the Government representatives and information supplied by the latter.

Some excerpts from these discussions may serve as proof for the justification of the I.L.O.'s existence, at least, if one advocates the improvement of labour relations, and that, in the broadest sense.

Examples of evasive answers.

Afghanistan. A Government representative states that the employers' and workers' organizations are in the formative stage, but copies of reports sent to the I.L.O. would be communicated to them, in conformity with art. 23 of the Constitution of the I.L.O. as soon as the organizations had been properly set up (example of an evasive answer of the Asiatic type).

Argentina. The present Government has only been in existence for eight months and was still facing the grave problem of reorganizing the administrative machinery after several years

of chaos. The Government was fully aware of its international obligations and would do its best to apply the ratified conventions (example of an evasive answer of the South American type).

Examples of erratic answers (answers on an absurd plane).

Columbia. In 1950 a Labour Code was promulgated, the provisions of which are in many ways contrary to those of the Conventions ratified by Columbia in 1933. The question is, what provisions are now being applied. The replies to this question are made by two persons who are heard with a smile of astonishment. The one represents the play-boy type, small, heavy-set and laughing, who can be seen regularly driving about Geneva in a white Packard, the other is an intellectual with suppressed complexes, small, thin and hairy. The jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Justice had established the priority of international treaties over any internal legislation. De facto the provisions now applied were those of the national legislation. Put concretely: the International Convention no 3: Maternity Protection, provides for twelve weeks leave, the national legislation for eight weeks. The party concerned who is naturally not interested in terminology, has de jure the right to 12 weeks but is adjudged 8 weeks de facto. 'De facto' means here 'in reality'. The play-boy states that owing to political conditions, the legislative assembly has not met for two years, but as soon as it meets once again, the Government would submit to it the modifications which should be made in the Labour Code.

Cuba. Concerning Convention no.....: Night work (bakeries). The international and national legislation are in full conformity, night work is prohibited by both. In Havana,

one of the most luxurious cities in the world, for reasons due to consumers' preferences a practice was established which constituted a violation not only of the Convention but also of the national legislation. The inhabitants of Havana insisted on being served fresh bread for breakfast. The Cuban representative is a tall, thin, slightly bent figure of the Antillian type with a mischievous touch (not malicious but extremely anarchical) who is of the opinion that nothing remains but to denounce the Convention or change the legislation. It would not do for the Government to refuse to comply with the demands of the consumers.

Liberia. The republic of rather black citizens from America has, up to now, ratified just one convention, and that, twenty-five years ago: in 1931, the convention concerning Forced Labour. Now there seems to be serious discrepencies between international and national legislation. An example. In section 1416, paragraph 4, of the Statute of the Republic of Liberia, concessions are granted the Public Works System to call up any male inhabitant between the ages of 16 and 60 years to perform the required work. The Liberian representative with the echo-laugh and long, religious head replies, that this section should be considered obsolete although it had not been repealed, as the government would then be accused by the conservative elements, of revolutionary intentions. Echo-laugh, coming from the distance, as in a dense jungle.

Indonesia. A government representative states that it is unfortunate that his Government had not yet been able to supply the reports in accordance with the provisions of the I.L.O. This was due partly to technical difficulties (a more specific explanation is not given) and partly to a lack of sufficient translators who could translate the texts from English

into Indonesian. Further, he considers himself obliged to add, that according to the opinion of his Government, the Standard of labour legislation in a given country cannot be measured by the number of reports communicated to the International Labour Bureau by that country. He can assure the Committee that the labour laws in Indonesia were of a high Standard.

In cases with a juridical turn, Prof. William Rappard, professor of the University of Geneva for 25 years, participates in the discussions. When the answers are absurd or insipid, an expression of forlornness bordering on desperation is to be seen on the face of this extremely erudite but also extremely sensitive grey-haired man.

24.6.1956.

Today, for the sake of diversion, though also to complete our acquaintance with the city of Calvin, which is still full of libertine touches, we have ventured into the night life of Geneva. At the Cabaret M. We arrived rather late, attracted chiefly by the head number: Nadja Gamal, former favorite of King Farouk of Egypt. The visitors of the Cabaret M. are seated on the platform built around the dance floor, which also serves as a stage for the performers.

We find ourselves among delegates from the most diverse parts of the globe. To begin with, a dreamy effeminate Latino, greying at the temples, in whom the changing of presence and absence of mind occurs unnoticeably, in the company of a good-looking female simultaneous interpreter of the robust blond Baltic type, known for her mastery of various Slavic and Romanic languages. She has difficulty in keeping her attention fastened to the time and place, she is continually distracted and stares in the distance with her green-blue eyes or turns around

suddenly; possibly she feels she is being spied upon, possibly she is longing for someone absent or for the impossible. Further there is an Englishman at our table, of the correct, rear-admiral type in mufti, accompanied by a sulky Arabian in dinner-jacket, who looks as if he should be handled with gloves. Then, attracting the general attention, we have with us a vigourous colored man from Nigeria with two frail French exponents of the demi-monde who, each in turn, tries to squeeze an offer of matrimony from their cavalier. Finally there is a gentleman in whom at first, to my surprise, subs. astonishment, subs. dismay, I thought to recognize the Dutch secretary of Social Affairs, but he turns out to be a Scandinavian who talks continuously in a language with an overabundance of vowels (oo's and ö's), though no one takes much trouble to understand him.

The numbers are definitely French in character; in night club jargon ‘existential’ means a mixture of vacant melancholy and absurd drollery. We see three numbers:

1) a chanteuse, deathly pale in dark mourning clothes. We are involuntarily reminded of Eugene O'Neill's title: ‘Mourning becomes Electra’. Her singing is confined to half-moorish modulations of refrains about the love life in French provincial towns.
2) a chansonnier in blue jacket somewhat shorter than those of the Paris porters and narrow overalls, deals with the same subject in the hazy-flat tone of Brassens.
3) Finally Nadja Gamal, the former favorite of Farouk. Her art is confined to the rather helpless danse du ventre of the oriental beauty, the success of which depends on the nakedness and an incipient obesity. Obesitas sexualis. When the dance is over she disappears rapidly in the dressing-rooms,

shy as a debutante. She was forced to come back by the long applause to receive a bouquet of flowers. The red and white roses of the parc de la Grange.

'Tiens,' calls out the simultaneous interpreter suddenly, 'elle rougit jusqu'aux épaules.'

'La naiveté et la perversité se touchent,' I hear someone unknown mumble.

I am intrigued by the expression on the face of the Baltic interpreter, a mixture of wonder and creepiness as if she was watching the sinuous movements of an insect eating jungle flower.

29.6.1956.

Those who do not know better, would think that 'white nights' could only be experienced in the extreme North. In Stockholm or Leningrad for example. I also remember 'white nights' in Paris. They were strange summer nights, the transition from the light of the late sun to that of the rising moon took place almost imperceptibly. It was on one of those nights that I sat with Alexey Vsevolodovitch on the terrace of the 'Select' in Montparnasse. We both had a demi-blonde before us on the round iron table. (His preference for milk and salt must date from a later period). In the unusual light the houses became silhouette-like, as did the pedestrians who passed by the cafés. People and objects exposed long, intimate shadows.

Alexey Vsevolodovitch was also in an intimate mood; but even in intimacy he could not quite loose his tendency towards reserve and objectivity. As to form, they were objective statements, but to judge by the tone, they were more or less sad reflections, you could say requiem reflections, about lives that were forever closed.

‘There was for example,’ so he began, after he had held the glass to his mouth longer than was necessary for one swallow, ‘there was the Italian painter Modigliani. He came from... Where was it he came from? From one of those jewels of cities, half antique half mediaeval, in Italy. Verona, a small Rome, Venice, with its impressionistic fall of light and its pickpocket mentality. Padua or Assisi, where the drama of St. Francis or Giotto, or of both combined, still goes on. Firenze with the mellow melancholie luxuriousness (he also alliterated in French and spoke of ‘la douce douleur de l'âme damnée’) of Botticelli. Perhaps he came from Ravenna, rich with Byzantine mosaic and world-famed for Dante's grave. Wherever it was he came from, in any case he lived a quiet and respectable life, without bothering about the wonders that surrounded him. He led the existence of an instructor in Italian language and literature, with children during the day, who listen to you with respect and at night your parents who dream by the lamp light of a professorship for their son in Rome or Bologne. Until once for a diversion, to get away from the monotony, he visits Paris and sees the lights for the first time, in which all objects: the women's profiles, the wheels of autos, the spreading ripples of the Seine, become so many wonders. No stronger addiction than that to wonder. He addresses a post card of the Place du Tertre to the head of a high school in Italy and simply states on it that he resigns as instructor in Italian language and literature, beginning with that date. From that day on he lives ‘de l'autre côté de la vie’. He does nothing but paint, drink immoderately, recite the Divina Comedia, with a louder voice to embarrassed passers by, or shout Lombardian songs with roguish touches.

Chorus of young women
dime che grazzia vuoi di me?
Chorus of young men
una notte dormir con te...

After the news of his death it was as if it had become silent in Montparnasse. The thin Italian who must always be urged to keep quiet was heard no more in the 'Dome' and 'Rotonde' where he belonged to the boisterous type. Only die silence of Modigliani remained, a silence regularly to be seen at the exhibitions in his portraits of long-necked, slanting-headed women. All that was left of the boisterous artist was the silence. He was the deformation of Botticelli.

'There was for example,' he went on, after he had remained silent for awhile and refreshed himself once more with the beer, 'there was for example, the Russian poet Pushkin. Essencially he did not differ from other poets, he was a vat full of contradictions. He possessed inspiration, he also possessed vitality. It is difficult to say what was predominant with him, inspiration or the thirst for life. Where did he come from? The answer will be given that his parents owned an estate in the province Pskov and that he spent a large part of his youth in Tsarskojeselo. But believe me, that is no answer. Where did he come from? I repeat in the silence of the white nights of Paris. He descended from the old Russian nobility and from the dark-tinted god-child of Czar Peter the Great. This was the conditio sine qua non for a mixture of refinement and barbarity. Where did the refinement come from? From the Ethiopian god-child or from die Russian pedigree? His life was a mixture of vitality and poetical inspiration. In Petersburg he led a dandy's life, with all the capriciousness and artificiality of a

pampered boy at the age of puberty, though he joins the Decembrists, writes inflammatory verses and is banished to the province of - yes, where was it? In school we had to learn it to the last details! There he was obliged to wear out his life in loneliness, far from Moscow till the reigning monarch, who was it?, comes to his death naturally or by violence, and he is given grace by the new monarch on condition that he will lead an orderly life. Mais il ne se range pas. Les poètes ne se rangent jamais. Ils se dérangent davantage. He becomes ensnared in the charms of the most beautiful debutante of the season - I also knew the date, but let us not persist - he became ensnared in the net or charms of the most beautiful debutante of the season of eighteen hundred and so much in Moscow. In the school books, 'il s'éprend de Nathalie Gontcharov, la plus belle débutante de Moscow, et son sort est scellé.' Then he lives in court circles who do not understand his genius and who will not forgive his proud attitude and spirit of independence. He finds himself in the power of the young woman who only dreams of frills and the Viennese waltz. Nathalia did for Pushkin the most awful and the most glorious thing a woman can do for a poet. She made him profoundly unhappy.

His life varied between inspiration and the thirst for life. Voltaire was among his masters, with his frivolity of course, but also with his lucidity. But Lord Byron was also among them, with his melancholy in seven, if not more, nuances. Lightness and melancholy unite themselves in a grace, such as we do not know in any other author. The zenith of his art fell simultaneously with the nadir of his thirst for life. It would be too much to maintain that he was disgusted with Nathalia Gontcharov and the court circles. It is a law of good taste to

remain courteous in the white nights. The zenith of art is achieved where no vital successes, no biological-vital and no social-vital ones are achieved. That was the pitiful and still beautiful life of Pushkin ‘le rejeton d'une antique familie noble au blason dédoré et le filleul éthiopien de Pierre le Grand...’

‘There was for example,’ Alexey went on with his story, while he pressed the empty glass to his forehead, as if to cool the feverish gnawing thoughts: ‘there was for example Anna Alexeyevna. I do not care at all where this feminine figure came from. Don't be afraid Anna Alexeyevna, I will not betray your secret. Anna Alexeyevna looked most like one of Modigliani's portraits of women, thin, long-necked with slanting head. Those who were familiar with Italian museums thought of a deformation of Botticelli. It was in the summer of 1914. It must even have been in August of that year. She stood just in front of the windows of the country estate, which was two hundred versts from Moscow, and stared outside. There is not much to see in Russia when you stare outside. Field, steppe, a few fir and birch woods. In the sky migrating birds. What kind of birds? That was also in the school books. Anna Alexeyevna waited the return of autumn, when she would return to Moscow again. Theaters, suppers, men's eyes, salons lined with mirrors, champagne that rocks to and fro in the glasses, and the salty taste of the granular caviar deep in your throat. Autumn returned but Anna remained two hundred versts from Moscow, war had broken out. The plans had to be deferred again, as they already had been once before because of her mother's death. Anna Alexeyevna passed the time thinking about the suitors who had sued for her hand. It became more and more silent on the estate. Her father, a general, had left for the Russian front. Her elder brother Vassily belonged to

an army unit in the Carpathians. Her younger brother Sergey, so lively and hearty, was arrested, on suspicion of subversive actions. Anna wandered through the empty rooms and stood before the windows. The morning and evening sun kissed the horizon directly and circuitously felt its way also to the birchwood, the fields and the steppes. She mused on the suitors. The one was of high nobility, but not richly blessed with worldly goods, “d'une antique familie noble au blason dédoré”. Another possessed thousands of souls but also the character of a brute, pardon Mademoiselle, d'un fripon. A third one was an apostate priest, with an incomprehensible way of thinking, a way of thinking that resembles the labyrinth in gloomy fairy tales. She felt more “pour le rejeton d'une antique familie noble” etc. Enfin etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. One day she was disturbed in her musings by the news that a revolution had broken out among the sailors in St. Petersburg. Que faire? Que faire?

Anna Alexeyevna stood by the windows as usual. She tried again to think of the suitors but she could not. She simply could not. The suitors had disappeared completely from her imagination. Quite different beings had taken their place. Sailors who carry off an imperial family as prisoners, threatening them with bayonets. Arch-dukes and arch-duchesses, who are led before a firing squad, some accompanied by a pope with a copper crucifix. The pain-twisted faces of her father and her brothers.

The peasants told later of seeing her ride away in her brown velvet costume, in the interminable snowscape. She spoke to no one. She took leave of no one. She rode away on the greywhite horse, Anastasia. In the interminable snowscape. No one ever saw her again. The suitors are dead. Very probably Anna Alexeyevna is also dead.’

Alexey waved his empty glass in the air and called the waiter

for ‘encore une demi-blonde’. I had listened breathlessly. The frightfulness of these stories did not lie in the content, not in the tone either. It lay in the look of reproach that he directed at me. It was not quite clear what he reproached me for. Possibly that I had not thought profoundly enough about the adventures of mankind. But there lay in his look, without a doubt, also the reproach, however unreasonable, that I was an accomplice to the suffering that those named, as well as countless others, had gone through.

The white nights of Paris are among my saddest and most beautiful memories.

[Nummer 3]

Antilliaanse motieven
Redactie Cola Debrot en Henk Dennert

Anton Van Duinkerken

Gesprek in Punda

Met Mevrouw Hermans

‘Wat vindt ge 't mooist van Curaçao,
De ranke barkjes aan de kaai?’
‘Zijn mooi, maar niet het mooist, Mevrouw.’
‘De branding bij de Tafelbaai?’
‘Gij raadt het bijna, maar nog niet.’
‘De vorstenmacht, waarmee de wind
Het landschap onderwerping vraagt?’
‘Nog niet.’
‘De Sint-Christoffel, die het Kind
Geduldig op zijn schouders draagt?’
‘Nog niet.’
‘Het afscheid van de zonneschijn,
Als Otrabanda vermiljoen
Een sprookjeshoofdstad lijkt te zijn?’
‘Nog niet.’
‘Van raden moet ik afstand doen,
Zeg zelf, wat gij het mooiste vindt.’
‘De zee, die langs de grotten schuimt,
De hemel, die het hart verruimt,
Het altijddurend krachtenspel
Van wind en landschap boeien wel,
Maar allerdiepst op Curaçao
Treft mij de taal, de gang, de lach,
De ongedwongen oogopslag
Van iedere man en elke vrouw.’

Anthonie Donker

Een half jaar op Bonaire

Bonaire, zoet Bonaire, wie misprijze
uw ongetooide afgelegenheid,
gij zijt mij van de drie zonnige namen
die ik als vruchten naproef in de mond,
Aruba, Curaçao - Bonaire het liefste.

Liever dan 't onvergetelijk gewemel
van kleuren op de brug voor Willemstad?
die zwierig opengaand, gracieus zich sluitend
als met één amoureuze reuzenzwaai
daaglijks onafgebroken de vrijage
herhaalt van Pyramus en Thisbe, -
    Punda en Otrabanda.
Geen brug der zuchten, een van zon en gratie,
waarop mijn voetstap een geluk hervond
dat het alleen van Rotterdamse keien
nog heugt uit een ver afgelegen jeugd.

Liever nog dan de Curaçaose wals?
door een kort aangebonden drift versneld,
samengedrongen tot een warm rumoer
waar donkre onderstromen kolken door
de golving van een lichter melodie
die van de Chobolobo door de nacht
ver over 't water naar de sterren zoekt
en met de stilte in een wisselspel

van wijken, naadren, kantelend en slepend
in onvermoeibaar schommelende cadans
gedempt, bedwelmend wegdeint int de tijd.

En liever dan het driftig witte huis
Stroomzigt? dat zelf een zichtbaar pantha rei
zijn welkom steigert in de schelle kreet,
het ruiterbeeld van Marino Marini
op 't heetgeblakerd, heetgebakerd erf,
waar muren gonzen van vers en muziek
een felle Christiaan, heldre Lucila
van een van ongeduld trillend palet
hun kleuren werpen naar de overkant
van een droomeiland ver uit elke kust.

En liever dan het ongenaakbre,
haast onbereikbare, vervallen landhuis?
verloren in de diepte van de knoekoe,
achter een haag van manshoge cacteeën,
donkere lanen, onbegaanbre paden,
het bolwerk eens van vreemde vestiging.
De stoep houdt nog de trots op van weleer,
maar water sijpelt door het murwe dak
- na elke regenval de gaten groter -
en onkruid woekert woedend op de grond.
Doch op zijn hoge terp ziet nog het landhuis
in mengeling van rust en heimwee en
vergane glorie achterom naar zee
waar onveranderd aan de baai de rimpling
der golven wisselt wit en groen en blauw.

Liever nog dan Aruba waar de zee
langzaam de rots uitholt bij Boca Prins,
met schuimtong lekkend onderlangs het steen?
De golfslag galmt aanhoudend in de grot.
En steeds fonteint een witte zuil omhoog
die ver uitwaaiert in een sprenkelboog.
Aruba - goudgrond zegt de naam doch sinds
ook hier de olie tot een goudkoorts werd
is er de goudwinning verouderd als
de Indiaanse grondslag der bewoners.
Maar onveranderlijk, onoverwinnelijk
de onherbergzaamheid van Yamanota,
de bijna ondoordringbare koenoekoe,
Santa Cruz dicht nabij de Hooiberg en
de vreugde opeens en altijd weer - Thalassa:
de lieflijkheid van het palmenstrand,
Aruba's kustlijn schoner dan bij Napels.

O ebonieten ras der zwarte mensen -
een ras vertrapt als dat der Joden, toch
zijn er geen mensen vrolijker op aard.
De levenslust golft lenig door hun leden,
spranklend als zonnestralen door het water,
de losse loop glijdt deinend door de heup
zoals zich slangen rekken op het mos
en raakt opeens versneld tot hertesprongen.
Het lijf dat wij als een vreemd huis bewonen
is om hen heen gelijk de schelp der ziel.
Hun ogen zien nog als uit een diep groen
door schemering van blaadren, takken, stammen,
en over straat gaan zij als door een woud.

De voeten veren en de handen dansen.
Hun stem woont als een vogel in hun keel.
Hun tanden staan als witte huizen aan
de glooiingen der lippen in de zon.

Creolen zingen in Papiament
't liedje der glibbergroene leguaan
die wegschiet langs de witgestoofde weg.
‘Moeder, ik zie een monster dat mij dreigt.’
‘Wees maar niet bang, kind, voor de leguaan.’
‘Het is een monster, moeder, dat mij dreigt.’
‘Kind, wees niet bang, straks wordt het wel een
jongen.’
De jongen neuriet in Papiament,
de benen schommelend langs de ezelflanken,
het meisje gluurt naar 't einde van de laan
waar 't uitzicht zich in schemering verliest.
De moeder luistert naar de grammofoon,
de vader legt zich naast de rumfles neer.
De jongen schommelt fluitend door de nacht,
een schaduw slipt tussen schaduwen door
der hoge onverstoorbare cacteeën
die zonder dreiging in het maanlicht staan.

Bonaire, zoet Bonaire, mij het dierbaarst,
van de drie Gratiën de needrigste,
van de prinsessen slechts de Assepoes,
maar toch - de ongereptste vorstenziel,
van inkeer en van mijmering en stilte.
Waar is de eenzaamheid eenzamer dan hier,
en stilte dieper in zichzelf verdiept

in het warm gloeiend hart van de koenoekoe?
Een zee tot rust gekomen en verstild
bloesemt guirlandes spelend langs de kust,
droomloos en zonder drift, bijna een Lethe
maar liefelijk, glimlachend in zichzelf.

O dieper in dit eiland door te dringen,
binnengaan in zijn stilste inwendigheid.
En de verloren aandacht te hervinden,
d'ontstolen en begraven goudschat van
het onvermengd en onverdeeld doorleven.
Een half jaar aan de haast, de tijd ontkomen,
de telefoon, doodsvijand der gedachte,
die telkens als men tastend enkle schreden
een brongebied naadrend is afgedaald,
zich voorbereidt op inniger besef,
afgunstig ons met schel alarm terugroept,
het zich ontspinnend denk begin verstoort,
het aanschemerend denkbeeld schril verscheurt,
O zoetste wens - een half jaar op Bonaire,
aan blauwe baai een houten bungalow
schamel maar in de onweerstaanbre zon.

Aan 't uiteind van het eiland, uit de tijd,
de staande zerken van de slavenhuisjes,
graftekens van een wrevelig verleden
die op de lijkwa der zoutpannen staren.
Maar aan de rand van dat loodgrauwe rijzen
een rij doodstille, smalle vlammen op,
rechtstandig, kaarsen in een doodskapel,
en naar men kijkt ontvlammen er steeds meer.

Flamingo's, kleine fakkels, in het rijk
der doden onuitdoofbre vreugdevuren.
Zielen die in het zielloze gebied
der afgestorvenen glans en gloed behielden?
En aan de oevers van die Acheron
één eenzaam wakend bij de overtocht.
Maar als zij zich verheffen, slaat een vlam
zwierend uit het grauw zoutmoeras omhoog
alsof die zwerm naar een nieuw leven vloog.

Eén heb ik doodstil van nabij aanbeschouwd
- als Mozes die het brandend braambos nadert
met voor het wonder ingehouden adem -
als van een andere dan deze wereld,
een afgezant van edeler regionen,
een vogel uit de hemel neergedaald.
De veren van een bovenaardse kleur,
de rose weerschijn van doorschenen wolken
als d'afglans van een eeuwige regenboog.
En de gestalte van een tere lijn,
zachter dan een Japanse tekening,
in een pasteltint van Gods eigen hand
spelenderwijs geschetst, een hemeldroom,
stilstandig als geen tweede sterflijk wezen
kan stilstaan, rustend in een pure rust
of d'aarde een azuren hemel was.
Een engleharp voor enkle ogenblikken
met argeloze hand op aard geplaatst
die hier een serafijnen boodschap bracht.

- Bonaire, zoet Bonaire, 'k zing uw geheim
maar het is zoeter dan ik uit kan spreken.
Zweemt toch van verre in mijn woord iets naar
het uchtendgloren van een vlucht flamingo's?
O zoetste wens - één half jaar op Bonaire,

Tuur door de glazen bodem van de boot,
en blijf gevangen in het glijdend spel
der spiegelende wereld aan uw voet,
een wildernis van wier en spons en rots
die met het water mee te deinen lijkt.
Een omgekeerd uitspansel - daar verschieten
tientallen vissen door het diepe blauw
gelijk een onderzeese sterrenregen.
Naar alle kanten flitsen zij voorbij,
de kleurloze, de snelle reizigers,
haastig en hongerig op weg naar prooi
(aandreigend op dat deinend oorlogspad
roofgierig de zandhaaien en de roggen),
kleine musgrijze, donkere blauwzwarte,
andre vreemdsoortig, parelmoergeblokte
of geel, gestreept, als zebra's of als wespen,
en statiger zacht in het water wuivend
gevinde vlinders diep geel, blauw en rood,
en pauwen die de staart prachtlievend spreiden
blauwgouden waaierend, een praaloptocht,
een weids en toverachtig défilé,
in kleurenweemling trekkend door de tuin
van zeesterren, zeeappels en koralen.
Dan log en glorieloos daartussen door
wat in die fonklende fantasmagorie

voorgoed verdwaalde uit de mensenwereld,
als kluizenaars van 't aardse lang vervreemd,
een kruik, een ton, een boeiketting, een anker,
onwezenlijk, ontdaan van hun bestemming,
veranderd in gewassen en gesteenten
op geen menslijke afkomst meer belust.
- Terwijl wij keren naar de aanlegsteiger
valt zonder schemering snel de duisternis
die nachtelijks dit paradijs omhult.

En ik herproef de warmdoorgloeide namen,
Kralendijk, Rincón, Slagbaai, Gotomeer.
Noem mij dit eiland niet arm en ontvolkt,
de speelbal niet van naijver en twisten,
spreek mij niet van de onverdeelde erven,
vergane welvaart en de jongelingschap
die onweerstaanbaar van hier weggezogen
een goed heenkomen zocht in de Caribbean.
De ezel die te vroeg onverhoeds roept
balkt angstige noodkreten naar de dag.
Bonaire, hard mij toch dierbaar Bonaire,
kaal zijt gij als cactee en divi-divi, -
ik neig naar divi-divi en cactee.
De cactus sluit zich in zichzelve af,
de divi-divi wendt zich om naar zee,
en beider vreugde is eenzelvigheid,
de schijnbaar stenen ongenaakbaarheid
van een streng afgezonderd mijmeren,
de hunkring die zich naar de ruimte strekt
en die van kruin tot wortel haakt naar zee,
een hard besef tot in de zachtste droom,

weerbaarheid in de warmste zonnegloed
en nooit aflatende oplettendheid,
aandacht die als een vesting zich omringt,
waarneming die ver ziende deernis wordt,
afzondring, mijmering en concentratie,
cactus en divi-divi beurtelings,
nu onverbidlijk in zichzelf gekeerd
en dan reikhalzend uitziend over zee,
door wind en golven eindeloos omspoeld -
O als de schrale verfhoutboom te zijn
waaruit men op dit eiland purper wint.

AMSTERDAM/LONDEN, *januari 1956*

Harry Schütte

Het eiland

het eiland waar ik over rende
en naakt op spelen kon
en waar veel jaren bleven
is nu zo ver van mij vandaan.

ik liet het witte zand hoog vallen
het lichaam leefde mee
en zong
en danste.

en ik weet nog hoe het water
om me klapte
als ik dook
en weer boven kwam.

en die dagen leerde
van gluren
op het strand;
ontwaken van mijn bloed.

op school de lokalen telde
tot de laatste;
waar ik steeds de ogen zocht
die ik niet kussen dorst.

en bij het springen over bomen
tot alles trager werd
en ik stil staren bleef.

John de Pool

Hoofddoeken

De natuurlijke vrouwelijke koketterie kent geen grenzen, geen rassen, geen huidskleur. Van de noordpoolstreken, waar de kleding noodzakelijk is als bescherming tegen de koude, tot de hete zones van het woeste Afrika, waar een minimum aan kleding vereist is, worden de vrouwen niet moe middelen uit te denken om hun bekoorlijkheden op haar voordeligst te doen uitkomen.

De hoofddoek (*lenzoe di cabez*) was in mijn tijd de natuurlijke sier van de vrouwen van ons volk. Zij was hun opschik. Een rok en jakje (*saya koe yaqui*) vormden geen volledige kleding zonder de bijbehorende en kokette *lenzoe di cabez*. De schikking ervan en de wijze waarop zij moest worden vastgemaakt, vereisten een zekere artistieke begaafdheid, die niet iedereen bezat en zo ontstond er een geheel leger 'deskundigen', dat een aardige bijverdienste had met deze arbeid van kunstzin en koketterie. Het vereiste smaak, artisticiteit en gratie om te weten, hoe men een strik moest leggen, een lint moest vastmaken of het haar kappen.

Deze doeken waren oorspronkelijk grote stukken echt 'Madras'-linnen, uit Engeland geïmporteerd, waarheen het uit her land van herkomst was aangevoerd. Zij hadden felle kleuren, meestal geel en rood, met in het midden grote ruiten en aan de kanten brede randen. Wanneer ze om het hoofd waren gebonden, werden zij zo geschikt, dat de twee uiteinden als twee brede vleugels op de schouders hingen, terwijl aan de voorkant een smalle band het geheel in vorm hield. Deze hoofddoeken wer-

den zorgvuldig voor bijzondere gelegenheden bewaard, omdat het schikken nogal veel geld kostte. De dagelijkse hoofddoek vereiste minder nauwgezetheid, maar werd toch altijd op dezelfde manier met de vleugels achter en het bandje voor gedragen. Deze wijze van vastbinden heette *Poenta di Scharloo* (de Punt van Scharloo; Scharloo is een gedeelte van de Punda, dicht bij de haveningang).

Van de mij bekende Antilliaanse eilanden waren het Curaçao en Martinique, waar de hoofddoeken het meest in gebruik waren. Op Trinidad, Jamaica en Barbados overheersten de hoeden, die, hoe voddig en verkreukeld ook, verkozen werden boven de hoofddoeken. Maar tussen de hoofddoek van Martinique en die van Curaçao bestond zo'n duidelijk onderscheid, dat wij zouden kunnen zeggen, dat daarin het psychologisch verschil tussen de volken van beide eilanden weerspiegeld werd. De Curaçaose dracht is sober in haar lijnen en doet rustig aan. Het altijd gesteven en gestreken goed kenschetst de ordelijkheid en nauwgezetheid, ontstaan onder invloed van de Hollanders.

Ik weet nog goed, dat een volkskind uit mijn tijd met haar *saya koe yaqui* en haar *lenzoe di cabez* zekere eerbied afdwong door de strenge lijnen van het geheel. Niettemin vergeet ik de indruk van dynamiek niet, die dezelfde figuur maakte, wanneer die lijnen in beweging werden gebracht. Ik denk dan in de eerste plaats aan de dorpsvrouwen van toen, die geen 'trucks' of vrachtwagens te hunner beschikking hadden, maar een paar uur moesten lopen om voor de ochtendschemering in de stad te zijn, hun produkten van de hand te doen en naar hun veraf gelegen huizen voor zonsondergang terug te keren. Met *sayas canga*, dat zijn rokken, die ter hoogte van de heup in een kleine bult werden opgetrokken om de gespierde benen vrij te laten,

een *roedia* (letterlijk is dit in het Papiamento een knie) of wel een opgerold stuk goed op de *lenzoe* en daarboven een grote mand (*makoetoe*) met de koopwaar er in, zo zag je die energieke vrouwen met grote, snelle en ritmische passen vier tot vijf uren lopen naar de plaats van bestemming. Zij hielden hun lichamen in evenwicht door een golvende beweging, waardoor de heupen energiek van links naar rechts zwaaiden, terwijl de armen bezig bleven de zware mand, die aan het hoofd van de draagster leek vastgeklonken, in volmaakte balans te houden. En ondanks dit alles bleef de *lenzoe* haar strenge lijnen behouden.

Daarentegen leek het of de wijze, waarop de vrouwen van Martinique de hoofddoeken droegen, door de Franse geest was beïnvloed. Die was van een zo artistieke ongegeneerdheid, een zo aantrekkelijke onstuimigheid, dat je op het eerste gezicht moest denken aan een volkomen ongedisciplineerd temperament, wars van iedere vorm van conventie, maar geladen met emotionaliteit en kunstzinnig gevoel. De manier, waarop daar de hoofddoek werd vastgemaakt, was volkomen tegengesteld aan die, waarop dat op Curaçao werd gedaan. Er bestond op Martinique geen enkele lijn; nu eens was ze geknoopt, dan weer gestrikt; de vorm hoefde niet precies aan de schedel aangepast te zijn, maar stond of wel bol of strakker dan bij ons en het geheel lag niet met de twee punten op de rug, maar stak in de lucht als twee bliksemafleiders, twee vaandels, twee helgekleurde speren. Dit was een omwenteling op het gebied van de *lenzoe di cabez*.

Die hoofddoeken van Madras-linnen werden mettertijd vervangen door andere goedkopere stoffen, niet meer van in India geweven gekleurde draden, maar in Engeland bedrukte katoen. En daarmee begon het verval van deze hoofdtooi. Toen

kwamen echter de witte hoofddoeken, met prachtig handborduursel, geheel wit of zwart, die, nadat ze eens om het hoofd waren gebonden, in een vorm bewaard werden voor belangrijke gelegenheden. Zij vormden een luxe bezit, want ze waren van zuiver linnen en het borduren kostte heel wat. Maar zij waren de galadracht op de grote feesten en de vrouwen waren er trots op zo'n hoofddoek te bezitten. Er was ook een minder strenge dracht, die *petji* (letterlijk petje) werd genoemd, een soort 'négligé' onder de hoofdtooisels.

Toen ik bij mijn laatste bezoek aan Curaçao visverkoopsters met hun waren op straat luidkeels zag venten in toiletten van zijde en voile, heb ik niet meer gezocht naar de *lenzoe di cabez*, want ik zag wel dat de vooruitgang ze had weggevaagd, toen hij als een cycloon alles, goed en kwaad, voor zich uit dreef en ons in ruil achterliet... wie zal zeggen wat?

(Vertaling van H. Dennert)

Elis Juliana

Tres minutos

Tres minuto di silencio
grave, tristu y pisá;
pa recordá esnan na Hungria
cruelmence asesiná.

Pa e balentenan cu a lucha,
perde bida pa Libertá;
den un tempu tán moderno,
den un mundu tán civilisá.

Tres minuto di silencio...
Corsow su historia a rebibá.
Toela, Toussaint y Carpata,
boso tambe m'a recordá.

Bira grandi

B'a kita scool;
B'a bira grandi;
B'a pone bukinan un banda;
Bo ta clá pa drenta mundu,
Traha pa mantene bo mes.

B'a kita scool;
Bo ta contentu;
Mirando muchanan chikitu,
Bo ta corda con bo tambe
A cana drenta eerste klas.

Bo sa' kiko
E palabra
'Bira grandi' ta contené?
Bo sa' kiko bo tin di hasi
Pa bo ta grandi di curason?

Sirbi Dios.
Obedes E
Cu curason chiki di un mucha
Cu ta jega Su dilanti,
Sin berguensa ni temor.

Cumpli cu deber.
Biba segun ley.
Respeta grandi y chikitu;
Y kiko cu destino trese pa bo,
Semper, dominá bo mes.

La princesa

Poco-poco ‘La Princesa’,
un barcu di bela blancu y bunita
maner'un castillo miniatura,
ta slip riba awa habri
distancia for di costa.

E rondseil ta bati contentu
maner'un cabai ancioso pa curi,
segun cu olanan ta hunga
y caricié bei su custia.

Su tripulante, cuater balente,
un na timon, dos riba bordo,
e otro sintá riba boegspriet,
ta waja man pa esnan na tera
cu tambe ta grita jama ajó
te or'e barcu kita for di bista.

E musculonan cu ta balia
manera bitchi den nan lomba,
nan cueru duru curtí di solo,
awa, bientu y serena,
e wowonan chiki di fiha
y e stemnan heers di grita,
ta munstra cu nan ta cuater homber
poné den wieg pa nabegá.

E distancia ta crese y crese,
y ora ‘La Princesa’ hanja

bientu jen den su custia,
e ta corta ola pasa,
lagando un marca limpi su tras.

E captan ta seha su timon,
saca un paki sigaria
cu ta scondé bei su sombré,
send'e y comoda su mes.

Mientras ‘La Princesa’ ta cana
corta ola subi baha,
salta un y cai den un otro
bolbe sali y sigi bai,
corta ola subi baha,
salta un y cai den un otro
bolbe sali y sigi bai.

Den seidoost un nubia ta lanta;
bientu ta bira más potente,
y más e barcu blancu ta cana
corta ola subi baha,
salta un y cai den un otro
cu ta pone su curpa sacudí,
lanta y cai den un buracu,
hisa cara cu orgulio
benta awa fo'i su curpa
y sigi corta ola bai.

E captan ta saca un botter
cu ta wardá den e sucuchi,
dal un cajente, pasé pa otro,

y bira man slek a djiepshiek
pa mengua velocidad.

E nubia a crese y bira pretu.
Bientu ta forsa den rondseil
te cu e manshiet ta keha;
olanan ta crese y crese;
awa a perde su coló.

Laman a bira peligroso.
E capta ke cambia rumbo
pa nan purba jega tera;
e rondseil ta perde bientu
y ta keda cunsumí.

Un gigante di un ola
ta lanta, lora y explotá
maner'un cajón den e custia...
U otro mas... ‘Hesá mi tata’,
!Cuidau!!... E master a krak,
cabuj'e wand a rementá,
lora na curpa di um homber;
bientu ta ranca cu un furia,
lastra homber y bela bai cu né;
un man ta sali pidi auxilio...
un otro ola ta gulié.

‘La Princesa’ ta snoek bai laria,
saca e tresnan benta'fo,
ronca y cai den un buracu,
habri y sigi bai abau.

E tresnan cu a keda ta purba
lucha contra e awa brutu
cu ta bati, lora y scuma,
hisa benta nan den laria,
fangu nan den cueb'e ola,
lora y scuma riba nan;
bolbe saca nan ariba,
pa promé nan cohe rosea,
e sigi bati, suta nan.

Un di nan a mira un cos
ta bini den su dirección.
Ela grita: ‘Master... master’,
y lucha pa alcanse;
pero un ola a lastrele
y habri e distancia;
di ripiente a lanta un gigante,
hisé y klap e rib'e master.

Ela gara, ela gara;
ela gara pa su bida.
Su companjeronan ta serka;
Doló ta corta den su pechu;
E ta scupi un boc'e sanger;
Su wowonan ta bira scur;
E otronan ta toca e master,...
Su dedenan a laga bai.

Un di nan a tira man
pa trecé ariba trobe.

Ela habri wowo y gara man
di esun cu kier scapé.
Net e or'ey a klap un ola,
y tur dos a disparcé.

E último a keda lucha
bon gará n'e master
cu su wowonan será.
Laman ta ronca, lastra, grita,
batié, lagele blo sunú.
Tur su curpa ta na herida;
Su stoma jen di awa salu;
Olanan ta hisa e palu,
tapé, gulié, bolbe scupié,
ma e ta gara, gara, gara;
Laman ta lora, bati, jora;
E ta gara ketu bai,
sin speransa di por scapa.
Oranan ta gatia y gatia...
Laman ta ronca ketu bai.

Poco-poco bientu a baha.
Laman su forsa tambe a mengua.
Poco-poco anochi a trece
su profundo scuridad.
Mil y miles strea ta resa
pa alma dje balentenan,
cu buscando pan di cada dia,
a topa morto y ta drumi
den profundo di laman.

Poco-poco laman a calma.
Streanan ta sende y paga.
Dos wowo heridá ta forsa
habri pa nan lesa cuantu ora,
cuanto siglo falta ainda.
Dos lip hinchá ta tembla,
y roga Tata trese salbación.

Poco-poco na horizonte
prome rajonan di solo
ta bora scuridad pa cambia
anochi pa di dia;
Y riba linja di laman
ta marca un punta pretu
cu ta crese poco-poco...
cu ta crese... cu ta crese...

Un stem temblante ta ronca
for di un pechu debil:
‘Bapor... bapor.. salbacion.
Tata... Tata... hacié curi mas duru;
Tata... Tata... n'ami forsa Tata
pa mi grita or'e pasa...’

El bapor ta asercando;
Salbacion ta asercando,
asercando mas y mas...

E ta forsa; e ta purba grita,
pero no mas cu un keho debil
ta scapa di su pechu...

‘Tata... Tata... grita pa mi...
Hasi... hasi nan mira mi...
Tata... Taca... mi'n po wanta mas...’

E bapor ta asercando...
Porfin, porfin nan a miré,
Nan ta bini... nan ta bini,
nan ta serca di alcansé...

E mannan heridá ta tembla...
Doló ta corta de e curpa...
Djiente ta perta riba otro...
E wowonan corá di sanger
ta span... span... span...
y mira un inmenso claridad.
Su oreanan ta tende un sonido,
un canto haltu... celestial...

‘Tata... Ta... T... hhhh...’

Un dushi calmo ta drenta
e curpa maltrata y heridá.
Poco-poco e lus ta paga...
Poco-poco e canto ta hui...
E dedenan ta desgará...
E mannan ta slip...
Silencio...

E curpa ta bai...
Tur cos ta bai...
Bai... bai... bai... bai...

Flor di papel

‘Mi tin honor di balia e piesa aki cu bo?’
‘(flecha di un sonrisa)’
‘Ah! Mi ta sinti mi den cielu.’
‘Anh?’
‘Bo ta balia dushi, bo sa?’
‘No bofon di mi.’
‘Bo mes ta dushi.’
‘Tcht.’
‘Ki jama bo hhh?’
‘Mi'n tin nomber.’
‘Ni di carinjo?’
‘Mmm-mh.’
‘Carmen?’
‘No.’
‘Rosana?’
‘No.’
‘Magda?’
‘Tampoco.’
‘Cuá di nan anto?’
‘Ni'un.’
‘Mi mes tin un pa bo.’
‘Cón?’
‘Yda.’
‘Di cón Yda?’
‘Un pida di kerida.’
‘Tcht. Loco.’
‘Loco di bo hhhhh.’
‘Di kiko?’

‘Bo hermosura.’
(silencio)
‘Mi tin gana di morde bo orea.’
‘Cuidau!’
‘Bo curason ta bati duru.’
‘Mied'i bo mi tin.’
‘Pakiko?’
‘Mi'n sa.’

‘Esta duele.’
‘Kiko?’
‘E piesa ta bai caba.’
‘Tin hopi mas.’
‘Phphp. Dushihhhh.’
‘Nan ta mira bo.’
‘'n Ta nada.’
‘Pa'mi si.’
‘Di con?’
‘Un hende.’
‘Kén?’
‘Mi... namorada.’
‘Ehhhm! Masha danki senjorita?!’
‘Di nada.’

Cola Debrot

De spijker

Mijn hele leven heb ik in een bijzondere verhouding tot het eiland van mijn geboorte verkeerd; ik ga er altijd weer vandaan, ik kom er altijd weer terug. Als ik terug ben, is het de eerste dagen altijd weer hetzelfde lied: verdriet om degenen, die ik er niet meer aantref en de vreugde van het weerzien van de vrienden, die men opzoekt, of die men toevalligerwijs ontmoet.

Ik zou laatst juist de brug oplopen in de richting van Punda, toen ik Leonidas S. zag aankomen, die de tegenovergestelde kant uitliep.

'Leonidas,' riep ik, 'Leonidas...'

Hij bleef staan, leunde tegen de reling van de brug en wachtte tot ik bij hem was gekomen.

'Leonidas,' herhaalde ik zonder te bemerken, dat hij welhaast bezweek onder de kracht van mijn omhelzing, 'hoe gaat het met je, kerel?'

'Wel,' antwoordde hij, 'ik ben blij, dat je mij zo hartelijk begroet. Ik ben ook blij dat je er zo goed uitziet. Ik zou je bijna willen waarschuwen, ben je niet te vet geworden?'

'Dat kan best, Leonidas. Maar hoe gaat het met je, kerel? Hoe gaat het er mee?'

'Wel,' zo antwoordde hij weer, 'met mij gaat het allerbedonderdst. Mijn vader is voor drie maanden gestorven, met achterlating van een onoverzienbaar aantal schulden.'

'Dat is toch wel bijzonder betreurenswaardig.'

'Mijn moeder ligt met waterzucht in het hospitaal.'

'In het St. Elizabeth's Gasthuis?'

‘Ik heb mijn job verloren. Om een onvoorzichtige uitlating, je begrijpt wel.’

‘Wat heb je dan gezegd, man? Je bent toch niet krankzinnig geworden?’

‘Mijn kinderen sterven van de honger en mijn vrouw bezwijkt onder haar verdriet.’

‘Er is toch wel iemand te vinden die de helpende hand zal willen bieden?’

‘Ik loop de hele dag rond en zoek naar werk. Ik stel geen hoge eisen meer. Ik ben tot alles bereid.’

‘Je moet niet zo praten, Leonidas.’

‘Tot overmaat van ramp beginnen zich mijn schoenen te wreken om de overlast die ik hun aandoe.’

‘Wat zeg je nou weer?’

‘Ik heb last van een spijker, die steeds dieper in mijn vlees dringt. Zo iets kun je alleen begrijpen als je er uit ervaring van mee weet te praten.’

‘Neem mij niet kwalijk, Leonidas, je had altijd een beetje neiging tot overdrijven. Het is toch allemaal verschrikkelijk. Je bent toch niet aan het overdrijven?’

‘Ik weet, ik had die neiging. Maar ditmaal overdrijf ik niet. Het zijn de naakte feiten.’

Ik nam hem voor het eerst beter op. Zijn wangen waren ingevallen en zijn haren vergrijsd. Zijn pupillen hadden hun glans verloren en zijn kleren waren verslonsd en zaten hem te wijd. Ik boog, half moedeloos, half eerbiedig, het hoofd voor zoveel rampspoed en onwillekeurig werd ik getroffen door de toestand, waarin zijn schoeisel verkeerde; de hakken waren scheef gelopen en de neuzen versleten.

‘Hoor eens,’ zei ik ten slotte, omdat ik niet wist wat te zeggen, ‘van die spijker kunnen wij je tenminste verlossen. Hier vlakbij

ken ik een schoenmaker, een goeie schoenmaker. Ik ken hem van uit mijn jeugd.'

Mijn voorstel had een averechtse uitwerking. In zijn ogen verscheen de uitdrukking van een opgejaagd dier, hij leek wel van angst bezeten. Ik wist niet hoe ik zijn onverwachte reactie moest opnemen en voegde er onmiddellijk aan toe: 'Maak je niet bezorgd, man, de kosten van de schoenmaker neem ik voor mijn rekening. Zij kunnen toch niet exorbitant hoog zijn?'

'Hoor eens,' antwoordde hij met de beslistheid van een man, die een grote gemoedsaandoening is te boven gekomen, 'ik zal je iets toevertrouwen, maar je mag het niet verder vertellen.'

'Neen, Leonidas, ik zal het niet verder vertellen.'

'Als ik thuis kom, sluit ik voor een poos mijn ogen voor de rampspoed, die mij en mijn gezin heeft getroffen. Mijn geestesoog, dat begrijp je.'

'Dat begrijp ik wel, Leonidas, je geestesoog.'

'Ik ga in de oude schommelstoel zitten. Hij heeft reeds vele geslachten gediend. Het riet heeft die donkerbruine tint gekregen. Je kent die wel, mijn vriend...'

'Ik begrijp je. Je voelt je dan natuurlijk tot rust komen.'

'Ja, en als ik dan zo tot rust ben gekomen, trek ik mijn schoen uit en ik voel mij voor een ogenblik van alle pijn verlost. Ik geloof, dat je mij niet begrijpt.'

'Verklaar je nader, Leonidas.'

'Wel, als ik die spijker niet had, zou ik nooit meer een ogenblik van puur geluk kunnen smaken.'

Ik zou niet weten hoe ik afscheid van hem had kunnen nemen na een dergelijk verhaal, als de omstandigheden mij niet hadden geholpen. De blauwe vlag werd op de brug gehesen; hij zou dadelijk weer opengaan. Mensen en auto's begonnen zich te reppen en te haasten. Wij drukten elkaar de hand en drukten

elkaar nogmaals de hand. Wij spraken onze beste wensen uit; ik had het over een spoedige, gunstige wending van zaken en hij over het succes voor mijn bezigheden, ongeacht hun aantal en aard. Ik keek hem nog even na, terwijl hij moeizaam zijn lijdensweg voortzette.

Ik vrees, dat hij de volgende keer zal behoren tot degenen, die ik er niet meer zal aantreffen. Hij zal dan worden opgenomen in de onzichtbare club der afwezigen: de knappe, jonge vrouw, met wie ik een gesprek heb gevoerd op de grens van het oirbare, zonder evenwel dezelve ook maar met een enkele schrede te overschrijden; de onevenwichtige idealist, die zijn levenszekerheid voor het zedelijk beginsel heeft prijsgegeven; de onstuimige feestvierder, die de nodige discipline miste en in een 'noche de ronda' aan een apoplexie is gesuccombeerd. Dan zijn er de velen, die zijn weggezworven of eenvoudig zijn overgeplaatst. Het leven is niet altoos rooskleurig, het is bijwijlen zelfs moeilijk te dragen.

Sommige ontmoetingen laten zich niet uit de herinnering bannen. Ik weet niet of ik lachen dan wel huilen moet, als ik terugdenk aan de spijker van mijn vriend Leonidas.

Frank Martinus Arion

Spiritual

Heat the stampers and rattling gourds
these stampers, this sound
of a hundred feet, these gourds
this tamtam, tamtam, o this tamtam
O these stampers, these stampers

long after my eyes are closed
in the shivering dance of death
these stampers will stamp

grind food, cassavas and corn
long after my eyes are closed
in the shivering dance of death
these stampers will stamp

I'll stay here, on this beach
I'll stay here, on this beach

stampers stamp
tamtams tam
gourds rattle
still in the shivers of my death.

(Translated by Estelle Debrot)

Luis Palés Matos

Njam-njam

Njam njam. In het blanke vlees
de neger tanden. Njam njam
De scharen van de monden
met rondom spieren. Njam najm
Steeds op en neer de kaken
met een dof ritme. Njam njam
De woeste nacht verslindt de
wouden en jungles. Njam njam

Njam njam. Afrika kauwt
in alle stilte. Njam njam
zijn maaltijd van ontdekkingsreizigers
en missionarissen. Njam njam
De eerste die tot Tanganjika
is doorgedrongen. Njam njam
en bereikte Teembandoemba
de grootmatriarch Njam njam

Njam njam Fetiesjen spalken
de mond wijdopen. Njam njam
En de pupillen van het spook
schroeien van gloed. Njam njam
Het bloed van het slachtoffer
bedwelmt de totem. Njam njam
En Nigritia is een en al tanden
en in de nevelen. Njam njam

Azië droomt zijn nirwana.
Amerika danst zijn jazz.
Europa speelt, theoretiserend.
Afrika gromt: njam njam.

(Vertaling van Cola Debrot)

C. Mêdedji

Aïeux

Dédié à mes deux aïeux

Je ne sais pas
J'ai tout oublié de vous
Vous étiez jaloux de ma naissance
Et la terre a profité de notre mésentente
Pour vous rappeler parmi ses dépouilles
Je ne sais pas
Mais vous m'avez trahi
Et je ne sais plus rien de vous
Le trésor que vous m'avez laissé
N'est qu'une houe
Je ne sais pas
Rien qu'une houe et une seule
Je m'aperçois qu'elle est la clef d'un grand trésor
Le premier pas des gens qui connaissent tout
La volonté ferme des travailleurs
Je ne sais pas
Mais vous m'avez tout donné sans rien me dire
Et la houe m'aide à tracer mes chemins
Maintenant je peux vous dire
Je connais.

Tip Marugg

Un butishi bashi

Mi ta lèn kantu di un borchi kaminda tin skibi TA TAHA PA HUMA i mi ta sende un sigaria ranka un huma.

Na un distansha chikitu tin dos muhé pará riba asera ta kombersa. Kaminda mi ta pará mi por tende kiko nan ta papia, de bes en kwando nan ta baha nan stem i hala kabes kantu di otro. Nan lip no ta keda para ketu ni un momentu. Esun mas biew ta splika e otro den tur detaje kon e mester mata su kasá, pero e otro ta protesta i ta bisa ku e stima su kasá. Ademas e tin gana di tin un ju.

Un kachó ku ta drumi na skina di anchi i ku no a aisa su kabes wak ningun hende ku ta pasa, ta kuminsa grita di remata ora e mira un polis ta bini. Ni maske ta ladron el a weta! E polis ta mandé un ‘godverdomme’ i mes momentu e ta sak kabes sigi drumi.

Mi ta kuminsa kana. Ora mi pasa dilanti di misa mi ta tende kon p'aden tin un tambu ta lora i kon un stem di muhé, ku ta zona manera stem di homber, ta kompajé ku lélélé... lélélé... stret bai sin stop. Mi mester hari den mi mes. E muhé ku ta kanta ei sigur sigur ta bai largu shelu ora e muri. Pero kiko ta dje dos muhenan pará riba asera ku ta kombersa riba matamentu? Esun biew mi ta kere ta bai shelu. Esun jong no, pasobra e no por muri ainda: e tin gana di tin ju.

Pero si e muhé biew por bai shelu, anto ké ubo di e polis, e kachó, e homber ku a traha e borchi TA TAHA PA HUMA i esun ku mi a kumpra e paki di sigaria seka dje?

Ora luna saka su kara foi tras di un kas mi ta weté pa solo,

pero ora mi mira al gun strea kologa den palu, mi ta realisa ku ta anochi awor aki ra.

Awaseru ta kuminsa kai manera tata di i hij ta kita mi sombré for di mi kabes.

Awa ta muha mi sigaria i e ta dunami un smak marga den mi boka. Mi ta benta e sigaria door di jalusí di un kas i mi ta saka un otro for di e paki. 45 Sen ma paga pa e paki di sigaria aki. Promé nan aja, un paki di sigaria tabata kosta dies plaka.

Pero kiko ke hasi, awor aki tur hende mes a bira ladron. Ami t'e ladron di mas grandi, pasobra awe mainta m'a mata sinku ju di pushi. Nan a kaba di nase i nan wow tabata será ainda. Ta bon mes ku nan wow tabata será, sino nan lo a mira kiko mi a hasi ku nan. Un m'a horka ku mi lensu, un m'a hoga den un hember di awa, un ma klaba dos klabu den su wowonan será, un m'a feita tur su lananan i despwes serélé den fréshidér. E di sinku m'a hinka un sigaria sendé den su boka, pero e no a muri. E ora ei m'a dal'e ku hilchi di mi sapatu riba su nanishi. El a keda sapatiá poko, pero a la fin tog el a muri.

Di repente mi ta sinti gana di jora i mi ta disidi na dal un kansion:

> ‘Ku tres sigaria den mi boka firkant
> Ku un mucha ku ta hole bleekpoeder
> Ku saku di suku kabes abow
> I mi pianan den lodo...’

I una bes mi ta kanta, lagami sigi kanta antó. Lélélé.... lélélé... M'a mata sinku ju di pushi i tog mada no a kambia. Tur kos a keda meskos; e polis ta bibu ainda, e dos muhénan ku ta papia riba matamentu ta bibu ainda, a kachó, e muhé ku ta toka

tambu den misa, e homber ku a ferf e borchi TA TAHA PA HUMA, nan tur ta bibu ainda.
Asta mi mes ta bibu ainda. Pero esta fuma mi ta awe nochi!

December 1949

Hein Roethof
Antilliaanse sonnetten

Curaçao

Onzichtbaar groeit het kruid, maar in twee dagen
kan rode kale grond er groen van zijn.
Als zonlicht even wijkt voor regenvlagen
krijgt een dor land van vruchtbaarheid de schijn.

Twee dagen hebben dit festijn doen slagen
en onvermijdelijk volgt daarop de pijn
voor wie niet overmaat van licht verdragen,
want zonnebrand krijgt alles wei weer klein.

Twee dagen maken van een mens een wezen,
dat zich bewust wordt van zijn levensloop
en nog eens twee doen hem alhaast weer vrezen,
dat hem niet anders rest dan ijdele hoop.

Misschien. Doch wat ons werkelijk heeft geraakt,
kan door getij noch tegenstroom geslaakt.

Bonairiaanse grot

Het water zoekt de laagste plek
en sijpelt door de nauwste kloven,
speurt in de sterkste rots het lek
en tart de steen maar blijft niet boven.

Soms springt het uit een duister gat
te voorschijn om als kwik te blinken,
trippelt het over kiezels, blad
om elders weer in 't niet te zinken.

Het water laat zich niet beletten
de weg te gaan door 't lot bepaald,
een simpele druppel al stelt wetten
waartegenover wilskracht faalt
en nutteloos zich te verzetten
als de gevreesde stortvloed daalt.

Campo alegre

De hoeren van het eiland groepen
keurig tezamen in een kamp,
want tussen deftige beroepen
in nette stad zijn zij een ramp.

Ziet ge die periscopen tasten,
die ankers rijzen uit de hiel,
die tepels glinsteren als masten
boven een fraai gewelfde kiel?

De hoer, die ons haar steven biedt
en zich tot in haar ruim wil geven
en mij die het fatsoen verbiedt
volgens een ijzeren wet te leven;

zit hier nog stof in voor een lied
of is het alles om het even?

Saba

Saba. Uitgebluste vulkaan.
Statige rots uit zee verrijzend,
gedoemd daar eeuwig zo te staan
als vinger Gods ten hemel wijzend.

De lava heeft uw kale wand
tot paradijs eens doen ontwaken
waar bougainville en flamboyant
zich met de kolibri vermaken.

Helaas, het was verspild krediet
verlaten zijn uw zwavelgroeven
en wat uw kinderen behoeven
is meer dan wat uw gunst hun biedt.

Slechts de verstoktste heremiet
wil blijvend aan uw boezem toeven.

St. Eustatius

Piraten en zeeschuimers maakten
u tot een oord van grote pracht,
als staten in hun voegen kraakten
steegt gij in aanzien en in macht.

Doch bleef er iets van al die weelde,
die edelstenen op uw kruin,
sedert het noodlot met u speelde,
uw pakhuizen herschiep in puin?

Sinds Rodney u heeft aangegrepen
en in Achilleshiel getast
verdwenen van uw ree de schepen
met hun zo waardevolle last
en rest er van uw oude trots
nog slechts de naam: De Gouden Rots.

Pastorale

In de koenoekoe heffen de cacteeën
grillige vingers boven 't vlakke land
en ademen de penetrante, weeë
geur van de olie aan de C.P.I.M.-kant.

Zij proeven aan de kust het zilt der zeeën,
gedijen meer landinwaarts van het zand
of vlijen zich gelaten als gedweeë
badgasten langs het Piscaderastrand.

Een koppel geiten staat verveeld te knagen
aan blaren overstoven van het zout,
verloren in de schaduw van het lage
maar toch beschuttende mahoniehout,
even bewegend de maar al te grage
bek, die gestadig aan het landschap knauwt.

St. Annabaai

Aarzelend schuift de schipbrug open.
Van het balkon van mijn hotel
zie ik de schepen binnenlopen,
de slanke tankers van de Shell.

Elk schip brengt aan de wal zijn groeten
en ook het fort strijkt traag zijn vlag;
zo pleegt de mens de mens t'ontmoeten
terwijl de ziel de ziel nooit zag.

Tientallen jaren hebben schepen
en fort elkaar dit aangedaan,
wie zal het ooit hebben begrepen,
tot in de kern hebben verstaan?

Een schip raakt niet licht overstuur;
waarom dan wachten op dat uur?

Hato

De tropennacht spreidt zijn fluwelen vleugels
voorzichtig over het nog bevend hart
dat, moe van 't driftig rukken aan zijn teugels,
in hunkerende huivering thans verstart.

Tenslotte in 't stationsgebouw gezeten
scheen met de luwte van de avondlucht
de scherpte van het felle licht vergeten
en met de dag de zorg voor straks gevlucht.

Voor 't laatst is daar de sfeer om ons geweven,

- terwijl de klanken van het Papiament,
zinloze flarden, tussen tafels dreven -

die op de golfslag van een kort moment
ons eens nog naar elkaar heeft opgeheven
en aan het onvermijdelijke gewend.

Rusteloos

Krachtens een marinetraditie tracht men her oude schegbeeld ‘De loden verrader’ bij ieder bezoek aan Willemstad naar Nederland te ontvoeren om het bij de eerstvolgende reis aan de firma Maduro terug te geven.

Ze waren dag en nacht in touw
en menigeen was van de wijs
want 't is en blijft een hele reis
naar Maduro op Curaçao.

Maar in het statige gebouw
tussen archieven, stoffig, grijs,
verwachtten zij opnieuw de prijs
bij Maduro op Curaçao.

O schegbeeld, rusteloze zoeker,
die nooit voorgoed is aangeland,
altijd met tijd en afstand woekert; -

verankerd in geen enkel strand
zwierft gij langs elke scheepvaartader;
men noemt u de loden verrader.

Autonomie-monument

Steunend op eigen kracht doch met
de wil elkander bij te staan.
En niets ter wereld heeft belet
dat het ook ditmaal zo zou gaan.

Geen kind blijft aan de moederborst,
geen vogel in het warme nest
en eerder dan hun lief is wordt
die dorst naar avontuur gelest.

Nog rusten vogels op het bint
om uit te vliegen in spiraal.

Dit is van alles wat begint
het eeuwenoude rituaal.

Maar haast beziet een snikkend kind
de gruizels van zijn ideaal.

Emmastad

Door een Oudhollands centrum glijdt de wagen
de brede weg op langs het Schottegat,
waar men na gindse helling reeds ziet dagen
de villawijken van een nieuwe stad.

Hier koos bedrijvigheid haar zetel
en klopt de rusteloosheid naast de rust,
staart een vervuilde schoorsteen, tank of ketel
op parken waar de bij de bloesems kust.

Smurrie en glans, het is altijd hetzelfde,
niet meer verrassend voor wie eenmaal zag
hoe men zelfs glanzend goud in bagger delfde,
bloedende vlieg verscheurt het fijnste rag
en ook een vrouwenlijf, het fraaist gewelfde,
wanstaltig werd als er de vrucht in lag.

Boca tabla

De zee wringt zich in duizenderlei bochten
en dwingt haar golfslag dieper in de grot
en beukt de rotsen, die zich koppig zochten
te dekken tegen een onzeker lot.

En elke vloedgolf komt weer als het schot
van een pistool, en wordt opnieuw bevochten;
de harde stenen slaan het schuim kapot
dat glinsterend met de bodem lijkt vervlochten.

't Halfduister overheerst in de spelonken
en waar de lichtspleet glanst lokt het verderf
van druppels, die als diamanten blonken,

maar als granaten spatten op een werf
en gulzig schrokken tot de laatste scherf
gesteente in de bedding ligt verzonken.

Rooi Catootje

Het oude landhuis staat en staart
alsof het lang vervlogen tijden,
een glimp op een vergeelde kaart,
tot confidenties kan verleiden.

Eens hebben slaven zich geschaard
op de plantages aan weerszijden
en met hun arbeid 't goud gespaard
waarvan de compagnie gedijde.

De tijd heeft hier niet stilgestaan
en trok zijn cirkels telkens wijder,
vroeg nieuwe vorm van samengaan
en ziet, reeds wijst uw begeleider
u 't grasveld waar eens heeft gestaan
el libertador, de bevrijder.

Frank Martinus Arion

Twee dichteressen

Voor sommige dichters is elk gedicht dat zij schrijven, een hoogtepunt in hun leven; een hoogtepunt of een dieptepunt; in elk geval zijn de gevoelens, in hun poëzie tot expressie gebracht, òf zwart òf wit; er is geen tussenkleur. Deze dichters zingen of schreien; ze zijn een bron van lachende vreugde of ze dalen diep in de putten van verdriet. De poëzie van deze dichters is ongenuanceerd; de woorden krijgen òf de kracht van hamerslagen òf zij worden juichende tonen.

Tot dit type dichters behoort naar mijn gevoel ook de Antilliaanse dichteres Oda Blinder, die ik hier tegelijk met een andere Antilliaanse dichteres zou willen bespreken. Haar eigenlijke naam is Yolanda Corsen. Zij is een kleindochter van Josef Sickman Corsen, die met dichters als Dario Salas, Wolfschoon, de romantische periode in de Antilliaanse literatuur van omstreeks 1880 (de Antilliaanse Beweging van tachtig dus) inhoud heeft gegeven. Zij is een zuster van de jonge Anton Charles Corsen, die in de moderne Antilliaanse literatuur een vooraanstaande plaats inneemt.

Geen wonder, dat ook Oda Blinder dienaresse van de muzen is; zij heeft haar dichterlijke natuur als het ware van haar grootvader geërfd en bovendien zal het feit, dat de Corsens een zeer muzikale en in het algemeen een kunstbeoefenende familie zijn, haar zeker hebben geholpen bij het volgen van haar roeping. Maar misschien zou het minder juist zijn om bij Oda Blinder van dichterlijke roeping te spreken. Dichterlijke roeping had zeker haar grootvader, heeft haar broer, maar Oda

Blinder dicht uit een noodzaak, groter dan roeping; poëzie is voor haar minder kunstuiting, het schrijven van poëzie geen kunstbeoefening, maar vervanging van een groot levensgemis. De geliefde - de onvindbare geliefde wel te verstaan - is het hoofd thema van al haar gedichten:

Verward
cirkelt zich
op u
mijn dronken
hart

De ronde
raast voorbij...
het kolkt
in mij

Zij dicht om haar geliefde te vergeten of om deze geliefde heel dichtbij te brengen, zoals in het gedicht getiteld: *Dicht bij je*.

Dicht bij je wordt het leven loom
met tederheid vullen zich de ogen
als reactie op een mooie droom.
Schuw wijkt de koude eenzaamheid
schuchter en verlegen
voor je warme aanwezigheid.
Nog dichter dan het eigen ik
weet ik je wezen
als ik in je ogen blik.

Haar verzen zijn echter nooit enkel opwellingen van het ogenblik; eerder kunnen wij veronderstellen, dat ze steeds voorlopige vertroostingen zijn voor haar blijvende smart en voortdurend gemis. Men kan zich afvragen of een dichteres, die zo gebonden is aan één thema, die zo door dit thema bezeten is, niet gauw uitgepraat raakt. Dit is het merkwaardige en ook bekoorlijke in Oda Blinders poëzie, dat haar thema ons nooit verveelt, omdat zij in elk gedicht haar geliefde met andere beelden kleedt, waardoor wijl de geliefde telkens weer anders zien en waardoor ook het wezen van de dichteres ons steeds nader komt.

In nauw verband met deze mystieke verhouding tot een denkbeeldige geliefde moeten wij de angst van Oda Blinder zien, dat zij voor immer zal worden versmaad. Van deze angst spreken verzen als...

> Tussen je lippen
> en de eeuwigheid
> dort mijn overrijpe mond
> als een bloedend verzet
> tegen mijn zelfverwijt.
>
> Vergeefs heb ik de nacht gevraagd
> mij in je armen te begraven,...

Zo wordt poëzie voor Oda Blinder werkelijke noodzaak en enige toevlucht, want gelukt het haar niet haar geliefde te vinden, dan zou zij, zoals wij zeggen, haar ‘tramontanen’ hebben verloren. Nergens heeft zij dit duidelijker gezegd dan in haar *Laatste kus*, waarvan vooral de laatste regels een diepe bekentenis en een innig verdriet inhouden:

De kanker wondt
op mijn gezicht
dicht
bij mijn mond
rauwt het open vlees
dat hees
zich schreit
om leegten eindeloos wijd
die ik niet omvatten kan
die mijn leed niet vullen kan
met de eeuwigheid
want:
dichtbij mijn mond
ligt de ontgonnen grond
te wachten
op verrotting van de tijd.

Maar alles blijft tevergeefs; haar geliefde komt niet, dit is teleurstellend en zij voelt zich machteloos en woedend, maar wat kan zij anders doen dan van hoop en wanhoop schrijven:

Aan een dierbare

Licht lacht uw leven zich
een verre hoogte
waar veldbloemen
bloeien aan uw hand

Uw weelde speelt
een hazardspel

trots lacht uw blik
de kansen weg

Als deze nacht
mij doden zal
als al
dit weten mij zal
bedekken
vind ik je terug
in het niet-zijn
van mijn bestaan

Geschonken heb ik
mijn stille hoop
door vrees geboren
laat mij liefste
als het kan
je wrede passie
toebehoren.

Deze miniatuur wereld
vóór de drempel van je
gesloten deur...
en dit blind vermaak
met effecten
in vogelvlucht
naar losse verten!

Geronnen moed
heb ik gevochten
gezocht een

doelwit voor mijn
stollend bloed.
Ik nam in trotse
wanhoop mee
een handvol leegten
als trofee

Dwazen hebben zich
verbrokkeld
in het lamplicht
van mijn zwijgen;
waar mijn woede
zich zal verlossen
gaat door verborgen troost
mijn liefde onder.

Van een heel ander karakter is de poëzie van Alette Beaujon, die veel jonger is dan Oda Blinder, maar die, evenals deze, vrije verzen schrijft. Alette Beaujon is kosmischer, veel kosmopolitischer ook. Haar poëzie is jeugdig, losser, hoewel zij hier en daar de neiging tot filosoferen en zelfs tot moraliseren vertoont. Alette vergelijkend met Oda Blinder kan ik zeggen, dat, terwijl Oda Blinders gedichten naar één punt, de liefde, of wel de geliefde convergeren, Alettes gedichten veel meer de wereldwijde ruimte zoeken, veel divergerender zijn. Het is niet zozeer haar eigen wezen, dat zij tracht te ontsluiten als het wezen der mensen en dingen, die zij ontmoet, die haar omringen.

Zij werd op 1 mei 1934 op Curaçao geboren en komt evenals Oda Blinder uit een artistieke familie; 20 is haar moeder een zuster van de Antilliaanse dichter en schrijver Cola Debrot. Zij heeft, evenals Cola Debrot, een groot deel van haar jeugd op de

plantage ‘Slagbaai’ op Bonaire doorgebracht. Het voornaamste werk van Alette, tevens haar levensbeschouwing, is een verzameling gedichten, getiteld: *Gedichten aan de Baai en Elders*, waarmee zij het vorig jaar in juni, in de Antilliaanse Cahiers, haar debuut als dichteres maakte. De bundel is in drie talen geschreven, er komen Papiamentse, Engelse en Nederlandse gedichten in voor, maar de ruim honderd gedichten, die er in totaal in staan, ademen toch de hele wereld: baaien, bloemen en planten van de Antillen; elders kabbelen de grachten van Amsterdam; langs de grachten dromen de huizen; verderop Griekenland pralend met goden en beelden, terwijl in de verte eensklaps het beeld van Singapore opdoemt. Alettes bundel is een grillige, fantastische reis: de reis, die kinderen soms in hun dromen maken of waarvan heel blijde mensen soms spreken, als het leven hun goedgezind is, als de hemel blauw is en de zon schijnt en de toekomst enkel vreugde wil beloven.

Ik zei, dat Alettes dichterschap naar vele horizonten divergeert, dat zij kosmopolitisch is. Deze uitspraak houdt in, dat Alette geen vaste thema's kent, dat zij niet gebonden blijft aan één facet van het leven, maar als een zoeklicht schiet door heel het leven. Ik vind deze gedachte geformuleerd in het gedicht, *de Eerste dag*, waarmee haar bundel aanvangt:

> In de schemering van de laatste dag
> verlang ik naar de eerste
> die de goden
> onhandig
> met onmeetbare kracht
> hebben volgebracht.
> Die eerste morgen op aarde
> teken van eeuwigheid

in tijd
een begin in oneindigheid.

Met eenvoudige, door hun eenvoud juist tegelijk treffend en reder aandoende woorden beschrijft zij ons daarna de plek waar haar reis begint. Het is de *Slagbaai*, op Bonaire:

Wij hebben
toen 's middags de zon
wat minder fel werd
in zout helder water
over rode riffen
en wit zand

Pas toen het avond werd
zijn we ons gaan wassen
onder de pomp
tussen de twee huizen
in de reeds koele passaat

Wij zijn buiten
gaan zitten
Ons haar is nog vochtig
van het water
en de avondbries
is strelend koel
ongelooflijk zoet
na de zoute hitte
van de dag

Ik voel mij
als Orpheus
in een delirium
van heerlijkheid
verheven zelfs boven de sterren
lichtjaren verwijderd...

Maar even later zitten wij met haar in Griekenland en luisteren als zij zegt:

In Griekenland
wil ik beelden
vangen in verf
op perkamenten
van vlezige stengels
Rode bloemen
soliloqueren
onder gouden wielen
en glazen hielen
van Jason en Achilles.

We reizen met Alette naar Sicilië en Singapore, om stil te staan bij het impressionistisch gedicht: *Koud en Helder*, dat een indruk weergeeft van Nederland, misschien van Amsterdam in het bijzonder:

Wanneer het buiten
heel erg koud is
en wanneer het waait
en kabbelt in de grachten
zijn de huizen aan de overkant
helder glimmend
aangekleed

Glinsterende steentjes
van de mooiste vrouwen
op het bal
wat laar gekomen

Champagne koelt
en breekt spattend
in de lange glazen
langs de waterkant
Juwelen armen glazen
glinsteren
in het zachte licht
duizendvoudig weergegeven

Het water speelt
met de lichten
geeft ze nu terug
en neemt ze schertsend weer
in scherven
rinkelend in de wind.

Alettes poëzie is lichtvoetig, zó licht dat ze soms zelfs de schijn wekt een vogel te zijn, die op een tak staat te kwelen, mooie, maar inhoudloze liederen. Zo te denken zou echter een grote vergissing zijn, want hier en daar onderbreekt Alette haar lichte toon en dan krijgen haar eenvoudig-zingende woorden de diepe betekenis, die zij bijvoorbeeld hebben in het gedicht *De Dichter*, waarvan hier een fragment volgt:

Dichters weten woorden
met hun macht te maken en pogen

hier ook hun heil
te vinden en het slechte te verkrachten
door een niet denken willen in de tijd.
Hij is ook niet rijp en zal
de mensen niet helpen maar
verslinden in het zwaar verlangen
van zijn ziel

zalen zwartgeverfde woorden spuien ze
de droeve dichters in een toorn van
tranen meegetorst en nooit verspild op
tabernakels van de goden
en woestijnen wrede wervelvaders hebben
hem
met haat bevrucht

Hij zal met liefde later zalven maken
voor de zwakken die zelf niet leven
kunnen maar toch de woorden van de
dichter
weren
zij weten niet wat zij doen
vergeef ze de dichters.

Vele gedichten van Alette behandelen het dichterschap, trachten het wezen van de dichter bloot te leggen; daarom wil ik, op gevaar af eentonig te worden, ook nog *de Jonge Dichter* citeren:

De wereld zag in jou
pas
nieuwe woorden

die legenden van het leven
moorden
en meer vergeven doen
dan vreugde geven

smarten worden
in mythen
beter weergegeven
dan door jouw dichten
willen

Het zien in de ruimte
wordt door woorden
toch verwaterd
vergeef ons onze
schulden
die wij brengen
in regels vol ongeduld.

Aldus heb ik getracht u een beeld te geven van de persoon en het werk van de twee belangrijkste Antilliaanse vrouwelijke dichters. Oda Blinder, de dichteres die doodbloedt aan haar gemis, de nooitverschijnende geliefde en die in poëzie haar vrouwzijn zin tracht te geven, en Alette Beaujon, die zich stort over de afgronden van het onbekende... zoals zij zelf zegt: Ik wou dat ik elk plekje kende in de verte... Beiden, Alette Beaujon en Oda Blinder, hebben met hun poëzie de Antilliaanse literatuur verrijkt. Mogen zij dit in de toekomst blijven doen... Tot besluit citeer ik een gedicht van Alette Beaujon, het laatste gedicht van haar bundel dat evenals een van de eerste gedichten *Slagbaai* heet. Dit gedicht spreekt mij bijzonder aan, omdat het

vervuld is van weemoed, het heimwee dat wij, Antillianen, allen zo goed kennen:

Slagbaai

Stil te zitten in de schemering
voor het huis te staren
wanneer de hemel plots
heel laag zijn kleuren offert
aan de nacht.

Snelle Spaanse waaiers in de lucht
een dansend begin
wordt langzaam donker in de verte
en komt vreedzaam naar ons toe
in de omtrek sterft het weg

de gladde streken van de zee
slepen nog kleine stenen mee
alle beweging is moeizaam
en bloeit niet meer.

Ik kom hier elke dag
de avond zoeken
en de dag want beide
heb ik op dit strand
voor het eerst gevonden
heel lang geleden...

Hanns Heinz Ewers

Curaçao

Aus Marzipan und feinster Lindtschokolade
baut ein Konditor hundert Häuschen auf,
Vanillerinnen, Nougatsäulenknauf
und knuspersüsz croquantene Fassade.

Aus rosarotem Himbeerzuckergusz
legt er die Dächer. Streut dann Mandarinen
wie Steine in die Gärten und Rosinen,
dazu die Pflaume und die Haselnusz.

Und in dem Delfter Zuckerzauberland,
voll Knusperhäuschen, gehen wir spazieren,
drei blonde Kinder, artig, Hand in Hand.

Doch endlich mussen wir die Finger rühren
und müssen naschen von dem Zuckerkand
- da grinsen Negerfratzen aus den Türen.

Auf dem Friedhof zu San Juan de Puerto Rico

Sacht stieg vom Graben auf der stille Hang,
die Marmorbänke küssten rote Rosen,
aus Lorber scholl ein Locken und ein Kosen
Steinengel lauschten süsser Vögel Sang.

Gewundene Wege, Efeuranken krochen,
ein dichter Teppich, überall hervor
doch ganz am End, wo sich der Pfad verlor
wuchs hoch ein Berg von ausgebleichten Knochen.

Kein Geld, kein Grab! - Hier liegen die Verbannten
für die kein Kreuz und keine Säule prahlt,
Zigeuner, Bettler, fahrige Musikanten.

O wie die Sonne auf den Schädeln strahlt
Ich zieh den Hut und grüsse die Verwandten,
die ihre letzte Miete nicht bezahlt.

Chandi Lagun

Camind'i Cruz

Un dialog na Corsow

18 maart, manesé di elección. Atardi band'i kwatoor, Lugá unda caminda di Santa Rosa ta dobla bai Santa Catarina, cu apenas un subida, i pa otro banda ta sigui recht na Montana. Di autonan cu ta pasa de bes en cuando, tin cu ta hiba bandera national y otro bandera democrat. Den aire ya tin un tristesa, secu, sin compasión, sin lágrima. Na banda robés un botiquín. Aki rond hende ta weta algun paloe die kadoesji, wabi y otro mata chikitoe, toer sin flor. No tin muchu nubia i esunan cu tin ta casi sin moveción.

Perul cu ke krusa pa soebi seroe di Santa Catarina ta keda para. E ta weta Pascual saliendo foi botiquin.

PERUL ki tal, broe. Ki donder bo ta hasi den botiquin. Ni un better nan ta doena aji.

PASCUAL: Leboemain better. Boso semper ta perde cabes Si no ta koe better ta cu doktool, si no ta cu doctool ta cu pastool i sino ta cu pastool ta cu butisji di ron.

PERUL*:* (ta keda weta un poco pensativo) ai ai ta com'tasina Pascual. Pakiko sara bo curpa? Ta malu pa curason Atamaki pará. Bo mes sa min' gusta e sonny boy riba bo cabes ej. E ta parsemi sumamente ridículo.

PASCUAL: sigur no, asina barbón a sinja boso.

PERUL: (no ta hasi caso di e chanza laf) ma esta hopi dia mi'n weta bo. Wel asina ba sali foi botiquin, mi di hej laga nos weta ki tal di nos paysano Pascual.

PASCUAL: (de repente su beis ta drecha) Jesus, bo tin razon primo, maske bo tun smeerlap eerste klas. Esta bon rato nos a pasa tempoe nan aja.

PERUL: ai si bo ta korda dia nos ra traha na Motet?

PASCUAL: Bou Captain Newton.

PERUL: Esei tun macho, un homber toer afo.

PASCUAL: E joe sin salié, esei ta miembro di un partido horroroso.

PERUL: (di bon curason atrobe ta laga bula i ta bati lomba di su amigo bieuw) bon'ta korda K.N.S.M.?

PASCUAL: I na waf di Skalo i na Isla. Si, esei tabata tempoe e tempoe bieeuw n'ei.

PERUL: Mi ta korda cu tabo a sinja nos com traha dos dia di siman caba ganja malu pa bula pipa foi trabouw, anto gana double trahando pa otro hende.

PASCUAL: (cabes den biento) Sin duda mi te homber di mas dzjispaus di Corsow.

PERUL: (pensativo) I toch bo sa, primo, manera mi ta wetabo i manera mi conosebo ya toer mi bida, mi ta kere bo'n ta pensa semper manera mester ta.

PASCUAL: (beis a dania) Tend' un kos, sjouroe. Stop di frega. Koe bo ke bisa un koos bisé No dal buelta. Ta ki bo ke meen?

PERUL: No consumi, paisano, papia cu calma. Bon ta corda kwater anj pasá cu ta tin un huelga na K.N.S.M.?

PASCUAL: Sigur mi ta korda esej i mas koos tambe.

PERUL: Wel laga otro koos boela.

PASCUL: O kee.

PERUL: Bon ta korda koe na un cierto momento nan kera hisa nos plaka. Nos toer tabata conforme. Ma abo ker a sigui cu huelga.

PASCUAL: Pasobra mi ta tin razon.

PERUL: No pasobra bo ta tin razon ma pasobra ta extremista mes bo ta.

PASCUAL: No bon ta compronde nada. Nada nada. No ta extremista mi ta. Ta berdad i sinceridad mi ta busca. Mi ta busca nan full.

PERUL: Laga mi bisabo un cos Pascual. Bosabi kiko e palabra full ej ta nifica na Ingles? 'Fool' ke meen hende loco.

PASCUAL: Anto bo ke meen cu ta hende loco mi ta.

PERUL: Si de e manera cu bo ta pensa ta hende loco so ta pensa.

PASCUAL: Scuchami bon Hende loco no ta hende di sinceridad i berdad ni mees hende extremista. Hende loco ta hende cu ta sufri di idolatria.

PERUL: Ai ai ta kom tasina. Ma compronde caba. Ta nos ta sufri di idolatria. Idolatria pa doctol cu nos boton cu nos barbón.

PASCUAL: I cu boso fanfaron i boso chambon. I ta sina ta tambe, di berde berde.

PERUL: Ma tende un cos aki, mucha nosentu. Ba weta nunca den bida un hende sin un dios, si un muhé of sin un ideal ke por adora.

PASCUAL: Sigur ma weta hopi hende den bida cu ta sufri di idolatria i tin masjá poco hende cu ta adora e kos cu ta sali di nan mes curason.

PERUL: E cos cu tin ta cu abo no ta compronde doctor.

PASCUAL: (un poco zier) Anto splicami, primo, splicami.

PERUL: Loke e ke ta pa toer hende ta igual na nos isla. Ma hopi di e hende nan ta un poco tapá ainda, nan ta sonja ainda di tempu colonial. Tapesei doctor ta echa tantu piquete. No kere ke mes ta gusta coi loco nan asina, e ta hende k'a duka.

PASCUAL: (beis ta drecha) Ta kaduká bo ke meen, no?

PERUL: Ai Pascualito, laga nos dera hacha i laga nos papia agradablemente, maske ta pa un momentico.

PASCUAL: Wel tur cos ca posibel den bida. Laga mi contabo un historia cu bo tambe lo goza. Wel mi conose dos dams cu ta sirbi serca Sjon Carlos i Sjon Maria. E sjon nan ei tambe ta un pokito triste coló, ma como nan tin conoci na Skalo i como nan ta amigoe di un Sjon grandi cu ta tin aki, wel laga nos bisa nan ta hende blancu. Wel e sjon Carlos aji ta bisa e dos dams nan un dia: tende un cos muchanan, cu boso ke bai reunion di partido nan, cordabon no tami ta kita boso. Wel e dams nan a respondé: si meneer, awe nochi nos ta tin masjá gana di bai reunion. Wel un anochi nan a bai es un i oter anochi nan a bai e otro. Despues di algun tempo nos sjon ya aki riba mentá a puntra e dams nan: wel muchenan, boso a tende nan papia. Ta pa ken boso tej vota. I bo sa Perul kiko a muchanan a contestá?

PERUL: No kiko?

PASCUAL: Wel koen kara mas secu cu di makako nan di: Pa Sjon Carlos i Sjon Maria.

PERUL: No broe no bisami.

PASCUAL: (ta baster di harimentoe) Nan a pompa nan bon pompá (e ta bati loma di Perul) bosá loke ta mas komiek. Meneer i mevrouw a tuma cos na serio, nan ta kana rond konta toer nan amistad nan kon bobo hende di koenoekoe ta.

PERUL: Laga para, esta baina.

(E koenoekeros nan ta grita di hari. Nan ta bati oter su lomba. Ma de repente Pascual su beis ta danja atrobe, su sanger ta keinta.)

PASCUAL: Tende un kos, sjorromboe. A la fin ala fan, boso te mes smeerlap ke sjonnan i pió ainda.

PERUL: Ta ken kubo ju, ki bo ke meen.

PASCUAL: Wel sjouroe, bon kaba di bisa cu doctol tambe ta bisa ke hende nan di koenoekoe ta bobo i bon tapá?

PERUL: Ta unda ba sali ke sej?

PASCUAL: E sjouroe a loebida lo ke e la caba di bisa.

PERUL*:* Tabo disgracia cu maske kiko pasa abo lo keda extremista.

PASCUAL: Wel a mi ta stick pa mi libertad, sinceridad i berdad.

PERUL: Pa hende manera abo no tin lugá den es mundo aki.

PASCUAL*:* 'Es mundo aki' ta palabra di pastol.

PERUL*:* Hende manera abo lo worde derá bon derá.

PASCUAL: Anto ta moeri mes mi tin koe moeri.

PERUL: Konkoe baj laga bai. Kiko nos kehasi? Ma kwalkié dia bo mester di mi, bin na mi kas, mi lo yudabo tanto koe mi por.

PASCUAL: Si, ora ma bira chocho, caca.

Cada un ta sigui su caminda. Scuridad ta koeminza kai den koenoekoe. Bientoe ta lanta un frescura agradable. Ma toch ta keda e mes tristesa, secu, sin compasión, sin lágrima.

CORSOW, 20 *di Maart 1948*

Nicolàs Guillèn

De dode soldaat

Is hij door een kogel getroffen?
Geen mens die het weet.
Waar zou hij geboren zijn?
De mensen zeggen in Jovellanos.
Wie heeft hem hierheen vervoerd?
Hij lag dood aan de weg.
Aan de weg heeft men zijn lijk gevonden.
Is hij door een kogel getroffen?

Zijn meisje knielt aan zijn zij en kust hem.
Zijn moeder nadert in tranen.
De kapitein brengt een saluut voor de dode recruut
en beveelt dan kort en bondig: *begraaf hem*.

Ra-ta-tàt.
Daar gaat de dooje soldaat.
Ra-ta-tàt.
Van de straat hebben zij hem opgeraapt.
Ra-ta-tàt.
Waarom treuren om een soldaat?
Ra-ta-tàt.
Wij hebben soldaten zat.
Ra-ta-tàt.

(Vertaling van Cola Debrot)

Azijn Banana

Sjon Pichiri

AKTE 1 - In het grote huis op Rooi Catootje inviteert Sjon Moisés met Antilliaanse gastvrijheid Don Pepe uit Kikkerland en Mr. Poso uit Sranang om er gezellig te komen keuvelen. Er liggen dikke sigaren, men krijgt er een likeurtje op z'n tijd en... men kan er negotiëren. Maar de heimelijke bedoeling van de invitatie is om Sjon Moisés en Mr. Poso in de gelegenheid te stellen te trachten zoveel mogelijk van Don Pepe los te krijgen om daarna de buit te delen.

AKTE 2 - Hennita, de bemoeizieke eega van Sjon Moisés, zoekt altijd een kans om over echtscheiding te praten en zodra ze Don Pepe ziet, begint ze hem lastig te vallen met haar stokpaardje, doch Don Pepe scheept haar af en dat maakt Hennita razend. Woedend verlaat ze Rooi Catootje.

AKTE 3 - Ofschoon men rondfluistert dat de conversaties te Rooi Catootje niet vlotten en dat Don Pepe zeer gierig is, verklaren de heren zelf dat alles van een leien dakje gaat...

AKTE 4 - Men beweert dat 't Sjon Moisés en Mr. Poso maar niet wil lukken wat los te krijgen van Don Pepe, aan wie ze de bijnaam ‘De Vrek’ geven. 't Schijnt dat noch de listen van Sjon Moisés noch de flikflooierijen van Mr. Poso enige invloed vermogen uit te oefenen op Don Pepe, die zich schrap zet. Hij heeft ze dóór!

AKTE 5 - Don Pepe graaft z'n verborgen schatten op en ijlt met z'n twee vaten vol ‘macht’ onder de armen naar Sranang. Sjon Moisés en Mr. Poso volgen hem op de voet om te proberen hem de vaten afhandig te maken...

- De klucht wordt voortgezet -

ACTO 1 - Den e cas grandi na Rooi Catochi Sjon Moisés ta combidá Don Pepe di Tera Frío y Mr. Poso di Siernam bin pasa día pa nan combersá poco, huma poco bon sigá, dal poco kale y... haci negoshi. Ma bao'i man incención di hinter e combito ei tá pa Sjon Moisés y Mr. Poso bati cabez cu otro y pruba mira com nan por skafier más tanto cos posibel fo'i Don Pepe, pa después nan parti cochino.

ACTO 2 - Hennita, e esposa mishirikeira di Sjon Moisés, semper bai ta busca un chens p'e papia riba asunto di divorcio y asina e mira Don Pepe e ta cuminzá mah'e cu cuenta di divorcio, ma Don Pepe ta kit'é fo'i curpa y esei ta pone Hennita djariba p'abao. Bon sará e ta sali bai fo'i Rooi Catochi.

ACTO 3 - Maske tin vrunvrún cu e combersaciónnan na Rooi Catochi n' ta bai p'ariba ni p'abao y cu Don Pepe ta mashá tranca, e sjonnan més ta declará cu tur cos ta bai tur afó...

ACTO 4 - Muchanan di school ta bisa cu Sjon Moisés y Mr. Poso n' por logra saca mucho cos fo'i Don Pepe, kende nan ta duna e bijnaam di 'Sjon Pichiri'. Parce maske cuanto triki Sjon Moisés ta usa y maske cuanto trastu Mr. Poso ta haci cu Don Pepe, e n' ke los su djekki. E ta sinta waak nan cu su rabu di wowo!

ACTO 5 - Don Pepe ta coba saca e tesoronan scondí y e ta baha na katuna bai Siernam cu su dos boconan yen di 'poder' bao'i su brazanan. Sjon Moisés y Mr. Poso ta hinca su trás pa pruba jop e boconan fo'i djé...

- E comedia ta sigui -

Mededeling

De volgende bijdragen in dit nummer werden aan vroegere publikaties ontleend: *Gesprek op Puda* (uit Verzamelde Gedichten van Anton van Duinkerken, Prisma-uitgave, Spectrum, Utrecht 1957); *Een Halfjaar op Bonaire* (uit 'Westwaarts', reisverslag van Anthonie Donker, Wereldbibliotheek, Amsterdam 1956); *De Spijker* (uit 'Beurs en Nieuwsberichten', Curaçao 1954); *Njam Njam* (uit 'Groot Nederland', Amsterdam 1940); *Aïeux* (uit 'Poètes Noirs', Présence Africaine, Aux Editions du Seuil, Parijs 1951); *Un Butishi Bashi* (uit 'La Prensa', Curaçao, Kerstnummer 1949); *Zwei Westindische Sonnette* (uit Gesammeke Gedichte von Hanns Heinz Ewers, Georg Müller Verlag, München und Leipzig 1910); *Camind'i Cruz* (uit 'De Stoep', Curaçao 1948); *Sjon Pichiri* (uit 'Lorito Real', Curaçao 1954).

De vertalingen van '*Hoofddoeken*' (blz. 16), '*Spiritual*' (blz. 35), '*Njam Njam*' (blz. 36) en '*De Dode Soldaat*' (blz. 75) zijn geschied aan de hand van de oorspronkelijke tekst uit de volgende publikaties: *Del Curazao que se va* (Editorial Ercilla, Santiago de Chile 1935); *Stemmen uit Afrika* (Antilliaanse Cahiers, Amsterdam 1957); *Antologia de Poesia Negra Hispano-Americana* (uitgegeven door Emilio Ballagas, Aguilar, Madrid 1935); *Antologia de Poesia Americana Contemporánea* (uitgegeven door Dudley Fitts, met Engelse vertalingen, New Directions, Connecticut, U.S.A. 1947).

Wij maken tenslotte van de gelegenheid gebruik om onze erkentelijkheid te betuigen jegens allen die op enigerlei wijze medegewerkt hebben aan de totstandkoming van dit nummer.

RED. ANTILLIAANSE CAHIERS

[Nummer 4]

Gedichten
Redactie Cola Debrot en Henk Dennert

Florette Morand

Ik ben van het ras van de nachten...

Ik ben van het ras van de nachten...
Ik heb de kleur van hun gelaat
Als van verre bloedverwanten.
Heb ik haar toverspreuk bewaard
In het drijfzand van mijn blik
Tussen het riet van mijn wimpers
Waar huist een onbegrepen ziel
Om ter visvangst te gaan naar de maansteen?

Ik ben van het ras van de nachten,
Nachten dronken van honderd mysteries
En nimmer wist ik het waarom!

Duizend motieven
Die nimmer bestonden
Luidden de doodsklok,

Kleppend: herinner u het woord:

‘Ik ben van het ras van de nachten!’

Ja, ik ben het

Onder de ontwakende palmbomen
Rust mijn verroeste dak. Gegroet!
Bloemen van de salsarilla
Bieden zich aan om mijn komst te vieren.

Ja zeker, ik ben het, de vagebond!
Woorden van liefde door zeewind gebracht
Zullen vergeefs in 't ronde draaien
Verweesd van echo's in mijn hart. Morgen

Zal ik nog de aarde aflopen
Daar is mijn hemel, mijn seizoen,
Ja, ik ben het, de vagebond,
En sluit mijn armen voor de horizon!

Ik heb gekozen

Ik heb de naamloze stroom gekozen
Rivier van de pampa's en zonder gezicht
In zijn loop na midddernacht
Onder neonlicht van brede lanen

O vlot van mijn schaduw
De morgenhaven ingegleden
Je richtend naar die sneltrein zonder blik
Glijdend naar de grillen van zijn loop
En nergens houd ik stil!

De cycloon

Uit het diepst der harmonie
Fascineert mij je gelaat
Veelvoudig naar mij toegewend
Ik les mijn dorst aan je fonteinen
Sinds de tijd der Farao's

En triomferend over de eeuwen
Dacht ik je verwinnaar van je zelf
Een bliksemwind spuwde uit je toorn
Op het gladde voorhoofd der vulkaan

Ineengezakt, verslapt en eenzaam
Op de zwarte as der dagen
Van de haard van dit mijn leven

Het schouwspel van je woede.

Er was eens een put...

Er was eens een put,
Een put waarin de sterren
's Nachts hun tranen van licht
Een voor een gingen verliezen
En de pelgrim, levensmoe,
Ondervroeg de ruimte,
Legde af de bedelzak
Op de vochtige rand
En het slapende mos

Toen slingerde triest de windas
Zijn weemoedige lamento
Als de emmer weer naar boven kwam
Uit de verwonde boezem van de bron

Heel aan 't einde van de weg
Waar de padden zongen, dronk,
Gebogen over de oude put
Een wandelaar de Poëzie:

Er was eens een put...

Op een verzande haven

Met leem
Betovert wat blijft
Niet meer het uur
Van onder oude bruggen

Hoe ver is de zondag
Toen het kanaal
In balkleed
Onder takken voortgleed!

Verwondering
Sterft met mijn toegenomen jaren
Zijn er geen feeën meer
In het liegend ogenblik?

De toverspreuk

Was het de sabbat der heksen
Verleden nacht
Aan de zeekust?
Alle psychosen uit het verleden
Opgedoemd
In verwazende verte der kindsheid
Na de rietsuiker drank van het ontwaken
Als honderd vuren van het oerwoud
Met hun vlammen-beten
Hebben geschreeuwd dat zij zich herinnerden
Op de vier hoeken van mijn geheugen!
Achter gordijnen van slapeloze nachten
Hebben zij gestoken hun gruwelgelaten
Om aan mij trouw te zweren.
Was het op de sabbat der heksen
Dat alle gruwelen der legende
Zich opmaakten naar Bord-de-Mer?
Negerlegenden
Rode legenden
Getuigen van mijn Afrikaans verleden
En van mijn Amerikaanse heden?
.....
Alle psychosen van 't verleden
Achter gordijnen van slapeloze nachten
Hebben hun afschuwelijke gezichten gestoken
Om mij trouw te zweren
Geen één ontbrak - dan
Die op de sabbat der heksen vertoefde
toen de maan met boos oog de tam-tam van het licht
Sloeg....

Spleen

Naar het land dat jou gelijkt
Ga onder zeil, wijk ver van mij!
De zuil van mijn hoop schijnt in te storten
Vallend over mijn ontroering.

Laat men mijn hoop verteren
Op altaars van zuchten
In stijgende wierook
Moet ge heengaan mijn hart.

Wat geef ik om mijn rozenkrans
Hijgend tel ik al haar kralen
Als mijn gedicht de deel oprolt
Waar mij het ogenblik vermoordt!

Wat maal je om mijn ver gezang
Echo die de wind herhaalt...
Wijk van mij, wondere pelgrim,
Vlucht, mijn onboetvaardig hart!

De einder is nog slechts een sluier
Dof als een brodeloze dag;
En in sterreloze nachten
Wijst zij mij geen enkele weg.

Naar het land dat op jou lijkt.

Vertrekken

Steeds aan de wind de vleugel van mijn wuifdoek bieden
Uitleveren mijn leven steeds ten prooi aan een tot ziens.

Ik zag vervagende fresco's zich ontrollen
Van uw doorzonde land met oevers wit als melk.

Ik scheurde mijn ziel aan distels van afscheid
Zag hoe dauw opborrelt aan rozenhagen mijner ogen.

In mijn bloed bewaar ik de vloed van Creoolse zeeën
De drang, in de nacht, een dwaze vlam te zijn.

De rilling van kinkhorens met bollende lippen
Woont dan geen vrede meer in mijn hart?

Nu ik herinnering van node heb...

Nu ik herinnering van node heb
Zal ik uw viooltjes medenemen
Tuinman van Rozen-Stad!

In de zoete herfstavond
Bij de oeverstenen der Garonne zullen
Bloemen in mijn kristallijnen vaas
Ter ere der aarde
Een gebed van geuren drinken.

Zal ik ervan de noten lanceren
Op de pas van de passaat
Die heengaan om muziek te zaaien
In de groene voren der Oceaan?

Nu ik herinnering van node heb...

Herinneringen

Herinneringen zijn fonteinen
Die de tijd niet uit kan drinken
PH. CHABANEIX

Haar naam boort vergeefs in mijn geheugen
Souiliy? Ferté-sous-Jouarre?
Trilport? Saint-Jean-les-deux-Jumeaux?
Het was een allerkleinst gehucht
Ergens verloren lag 't bij Meaux.
't Gemaaide koren droogde in de garven
En aren in het gras verstrooid
Verzamelden zich rond mijn vingertoppen
Op de weg die naar 't bos leidt
Terwijl de lange vlakte langs
Tralaridon dondaine
Onder de rust der populieren
Murmelt uitgeput de Marne
Biedend de ogen van zijn groen gelaat
Aan biezen die de haardos kammen
Van het naar haar toegebogen riet
Alvorens de ruimte te gaan verkennen

Mij was dat allerkleinst gehucht zo lief
Geurende van vochtig hooi
Tot op de rauwe kreet der raven
Die brak op het front van molenstenen
Herinnerend aan oude tijden
Onder de tropen aan andere bossen
Het ravijn met klare stem
De zoete zucht van de savannahs
De golvende zee van suikerriet
Ergens, dichtbij Morne-à-l'Eau...

Onder het brandhout van de vlamboom

Onder het brandhout van de Vlamboom
Als je daar neerlei je hart van vlees
Je hart waarvan de herfstkou alle vezels deed bevriezen...
Onder het brandhout van de Vlamboom
Zou je wellicht iets in je voelen branden,
Een straal in je schijnen, een boom in je bloeien
En slaan dat hart, dat doodgewaande hart.
Misschien zou je mij dan gaan begrijpen?
Want er is een tijd van lijden,
Zoals er een is voor de bloem van de Vlamboom
Als een geur van de Patchouli
Zingend in het goud van een zonnestraal.
Wat blijft, mijn vriend, dat zie je:
Dat is niet de roos die verwondt,
Dat is noch het uur, noch de dag,
Noch de aloë der herinnering
Daar is de hoop die weer opbloeit,
Onder het brandhout van de Vlamboom...

Lente

Het blauwe oog van de hemel ging helder open
De knoppen parelen aan het eind der takken
De wind heeft haar bronzen stem verloren
Om schone zondagen te groeten...

De verliefden zijn als mussen
Trekkebekkend met elkander in de lanen.
Een troepje vogeltjes
Zingt onder hoge veder bomen 't voorjaarslied.

Trilwiekend vliegt de vlinder
Op verovering uit, steeds schoner,
En de witgemutste krokus
Buigt zich over verse bloem.

Het is lente onder de zon,
Het is de vlucht der sombere winters,
Maar is in het hart de tijd
Voor immortellen en voor rozen?

Avond op de antillen

De zon heeft het goud van zijn fakkel
Gedompeld in de zee.
Op de lange oever
Der Karaïbische wateren
Waar het hermelijn der golven
De zoom van de mantilla schikt
Glijdt heimelijk het kleed van de avond...
In de avonddamp dringt langzaam
Door de zeewind aangevoerd
Geur van vanille
Zwevend langzaam voor de bootsman uit
Om hem te doen dromen
Van genietingen der goudeilanden
En van lyrische decors:
Die eeuwige illusie!
Langzaam wordt de hemelkap
Met gouden lovertjes bezaaid.
Van duizend glimwormen
Richten de schijnwerpers
Hun stralen op de kokosboom
En op het blanke strand
Grift de bulderende wind zijn bloedig spoor.
Een epistel ontbrandt
Om het lonken van een bleke ster.

Nacht in Guyana

De zeezwaluw maakt niet meer het hof
Aan de ibis die de haag bebloedt
Hij betreurt het sterven van de dag
In amberkleurig opgaand hout

In blauw zand van oneindigheid
Verzamelt het moment de klompen goud
In moede loop wiegt de Maroni
Haar teer geliefde wouden

De nachtroep van de wilde dieren
Laat echo's klinken op savannah's
Omringd, omstuwd door haar piaya's
Streeft zij naar stergoud op de Guyana.

Tamtam

Aanhoort in een lucht van vanille bezwangerde tamtam in tonen, luguber en zacht!
FRANCIS JAMMES

Dof stijgt de melopee
Op de roeislag
Vanavond is het Afrika dat zingt!
Onder de maan
Ontwaken ingeslapen echo's
Plotseling:
Hoort Afrika: het zingt!
Verjaagd is de slaap
Van mijn brand-hete brits
Mijn kokend bloed
Slaat dol in mijn slapen
Van wege de tamtam
De tamtam herhaalt
Het lied van het verleden
Onder zilveren bamboestengels
Onder bamboe en gomboom
Onder zilver en koper
Onder de hemel van Guadeloupe
Broeders, ik hoor daarginds
Stijgt de roep van de bamboula!
Zing mij, herhaal
Het slavenlied
Wiegenlied van hun lijden
Zang der geboeiden
Broederlied

Krans der ellende
Tamtam van het heimwee!
Wierook van hoop
Doet trillen de vezels
Van klagende hanen
Maar de witte wolk
Van lenigende dromen
Onder vergeeld ivoor
Van de bloeiende Cassiaboom
Onder gewonde fronten
Van hun vlammend purper
Stijgt in de avondstond
De roep der zwarten!

Schelpen halssnoer

Schone ligging, lichtend, lachend,
Waar ik mijn dromen met mij voerde
En de ijdele hoop bezocht
Van een zo begeerde toekomst

In uw blauwe hemels liet ik vliegen
De klare morgens van mijn lentes
Rijgend aan uw strand
De schelpen van de schone dagen

Wat heb ik daarmee gedaan? Het lange halssnoer
Geurt naar amber door mijn hart...
En een doos herinneringen
Biedt hem het heimwee van mijn fel verlangen

Als ik aan mijn dwalend leven denk:
Verloren dromenparadijs
Welks vreemde wierookgeuren
Mij de lente weder brengt.

Ik ben niet van hier...

Ik ben niet van hier
Ik kom van een land ongenaakbaar als de nacht
Ja scherper nog en duisterder...
Ik kom van een land
Waar vrienden wachten rond een vreugdloos vuur
Een hond huilt tot in de dood
Bewakend mijn huis
Van graniet en klimop
Waar ik de dragen leegreeg
Van de volheid van mijn tijd

Ik ben verdwaald
Op een avond vol dwaasheid
Ik had mij bedronken
Ik stal de wijn van het avontuur
Uit de wijnzak van de maan
Die openbarstte over onze grenzen
En sedert wankel ik aan de grenspalen der levenden

Hoor de blasfemie van de donder
Hoor hoe zijn kanonnen bulderend mij roepen
De orkaan bliksemt en slingert vervloeking
‘Zul je komen?’

Hier ben ik
Zij gaan aan mij voorbij
Zij zien het lange floers niet in het blikveld van mijn oog
Blik van verzwakte schipbreukeling

Ik ben niet van hier
Reiziger, leer mij de wet van elders!
Is hij zo ver
Met franje van filao's
Die naar omhoog leidt
Hen die niet branden door de vuurgloed van de mens?

Ik zou naar mijn land van stenen willen gaan
Ik weet nu nog alleen van kiezelwoorden...

En het al is rood rond mij...

Twee noten op mijn zang

Ginds liet ik geur van witte druiven
Ananas in 't veld gerijpt
Rode rivier met stroomversnelling
Veldbedding van blauw bazalt -

Ginds liet ik amber van cytheren
Vlucht van lijsters en bengali
Onder vredespijp van zwavelgroeve
Bossen, lapis-lazuli gekleurd.

De zwarte boer met Creoolse tongval
Weemoedig ver de trommelslager
De groene kaars van glimmende wormen
En achteloze liefdeszangen

Hier heb ik sneeuw en najaar gevonden
Goud van de oogst, van taxus en sparre,
Goudkleurige leiboom bij de Garonne,
Geest van Parijs, oevers der Rijn...

Mijn geest doorspookt gij, o tover-Antillen!
Wanneer zal weerklinken de gong van retour
Onder de gomboom, in wierook van vanille,
Mijn oude vasteland, zal ik u ooit vergeten?

Ten leste zie ik dat ik u liefheb.
Land van Frankrijk en tropische grond!
In mij dooreen, leeft gij edelsteen,
Wier naam mij bijlicht als een boordlicht!

(Vertalingen van Daniel de Graaf)

Bernado Ashetu

Ciudad Bolivar 6-12-'57

Telkens kom je weer in andere plaatsen. Je wordt er moe van maar je merkt het zelf niet. Hier regent het en elders schijnt vrolijk de zon. In feite begrijp je er niets van. Ergens ga je dan ook maar zitten in het gras. Je voelt je zoals het zich met woorden haast niet zeggen laat. Je voelt je eindeloos verlaten. Je plukt om je heen twee bloemen en vergelijkt ze met elkaar. De ene is rood, de andere lila. Je plukt er nog twee. De ene geel, de andere wit. Je weet het niet. Je loopt moedeloos naar de rivier. Je beziet het stromende water. Je werpt er een kushand naar toe of je stoot er een vloek tegen uit. Hoe immers, in hemelsnaam, kan je wat weten. Tenslotte loop je naar een hut aan de rand van het stadje, een kleine hut van klei waarin een vrouw woont. Je duwt de deur open. Je gaat naar binnen. Haar groet beantwoord je niet. Je voelt haar vragende blikken. Je voelt de ontoereikendheid en machteloosheid van woorden. Je haat maar je wil niet haten. Je wil vergeten. Je kust haar lippen. Je sluit je ogen.

Breng bloemen

Zo sprak de wind,
zo het water en
zo donker waren de
wolken nooit geweest.
Een witte vogel vloog schichtig,
vloog opgejaagd, vloog dronken naar de kust
terwijl de jongeling
op het kermende schip haastig
schreef,
breng bloemen, schreef hij,
breng bloemen naar het graf
van die er niet meer is.

De jager

Altijd hield ik van jagen, nooit gaf ik wat om de visvangst en wel omdat ik mij in het bos meer thuis voelde dan bij het water. Maar betrekkelijk kort nadat ik een prachtig hert geschoten had, droomde ik elke nacht van water en van rode en blauwe vissen. Daarom besloot ik mij, mijns ondanks, te gaan wijden aan de visvangst en was er zelfs van overtuigd dat niets een dieper genot kon schenken dan het vangen van slanke, kleurige vissen. Ik ging op reis, op zoek naar water. Maanden reisde ik voort zonder te vinden wat ik zocht. Eindelijk kwam ik bij een meer, te midden van heuvelland, waarvan men zei dat er allerlei vis van allerlei kleuren in leefde. Opgetogen wierp ik mijn netten uit en inderdaad, men had gelijk, glanzende blauwe en glanzende rode raakten in mijn netten verstrikt. Ik was tevreden en elke dag weer koesterde ik mij naast de gevangen vis in de warme zonneschijn, de goden dankend.

Op een dag echter, op een dag helaas, kwam er een einde aan dit zacht geluk. Ik keerde toen namelijk van de vangst terug met een bijzonder mooie, donkerrode vis die mij tot verrukking had gebracht. Maar terwijl ik mij naast hem neervlijde in de warme stralen van de zon, zag ik opeens in de verte, over de hoogste heuvelrug, een hert voorbijsnellen. Ze was mooi, mooier en ranker dan alles wat ik ooit gezien had. Als van de duivel bezeten sprong ik op; ik wilde jagen. Ik zou en ik moest mijn levenlang jagen. Diezelfde dag nog vervloekte ik alle vis en ging op weg, terug naar het bos, een brede glimlach om mijn gulzige mond.

Droevig

Droevig kan men zeggen, spreekt het kind.
Droevig kan men zeggen, kleurt de steen tegen een paarse achtergrond.
Men kan zeggen dat de hondekop op het plaatje zo droevig staart.
Droevig klinkt het gezang dat wij horen dag en nacht.
Droevig is het landschap waarop een zuiver zonlicht valt.
En droevig, diep-droevig, kan men zeggen, treedt de duisternis in.

Zinloos

Het heeft geen zin om aan je te schrijven.
De wandelwegen zijn allang besmeurd en je weet
wat er gebeurde met de duif in het woud.
Grijze wolken zag ik nooit zonder onrust
en nimmer genoot ik rust bij het stralen van de zon.
Het heeft geen zin om aan je te schrijven.
Het witte kleed waarmee ik rondga in de duisternis
schenkt mij geen troost en geen verheugenis.
Het hangt om mijn schouders slechts om hen af te schrikken
die tot mij komen in de gedaante van rode vlammen.

Dorst

Zoekende naar water zagen wij opeens recht voor ons uit een kermisland waar blauwe en gele vlaggetjes wapperden in de wind. Dat is het nieuwe land, zei Ariwara. Ik zei dat is het schone land waarin wij zullen drinken en feest zullen vieren omdat we op onze tocht goede mensen geworden zijn met een zuiver hart. En als we gedronken hebben en feest gevierd dan zullen we vele, lange nachten kunnen slapen, zei Ariwara, ik ben zo blij dat dit voorbij is want ik versmacht van de dorst. Ik zei, ik ook, ik versmacht ook van de dorst en we zullen kunnen slapen vele, lange nachten in dat mooie land.

Zo liepen we verder naar dat kermisland. -

Aan onze tocht is geen einde gekomen. Er was geen kermisland maar God zijn eeuwig vuur en zijn zand in het rond en overal. En dorst in die hel, dorst, enkel dorst.

Bij drieen

Neen, ik gebruik ze nooit bij tweeën, altijd bij drieën. Over deze zoete vruchten valt trouwens niet te praten. Gewoonweg 's nachts zagen wij ze in de verte. Mijn vriend stal de eerste, samen stalen we toen een mand vol. Sindsdien neem ik ze tot mij als dagelijks voedsel. Ze hebben een kleur waarop ik verliefd ben en hun smaak en sap maken het onmogelijk ze bij tweeën te gebruiken. Ik neem ze steeds bij drieën en sluit dan de witte gordijnen voor de rode sofa waarop ik altijd zo ongelofelijk droom, zo ongelofelijk en uitzinnig dat ik dikwijls denk buitensporig van aard of ziek van geest te zijn.

Tijgervel

Ik zeg dat er van mijn leven niets valt te maken, werkelijk niets. Toen ik je riep, Branshana, verstond je me niet en kwam je niet. Overigens klaag ik al jaren over de hemel en ik klaag over de zee. Uiteindelijk heb ik maar een tijgervel gekocht, glanzend mooi om dagelijks uren naar te kijken en ik heb mijn wanden russen allerlei bloemen versierd met messen en dolken.

Ik heb ze versierd en wacht maar, Branshana, ik heb de tijd.

Een zieke

Zij was anders
dan ik haar gekend had.
Haar haren wonden me op.
Zij was als nachten,
zo veranderd,
zij die eens was als de dag.
Zij weende telkens om een genade,
zij weende om de wrok van een volk.
Zij prevelde almaar: Zijn genade
en wee, wee dat volk.

Het kind

Het kind van de rekening,
dat kind, dat achtergebleven kind.
Wat ziet het daar voor een
zwarte kat spelen bij een
zonnebloem en wat een zon,
wat een zon schijnt er op
de zwarte kat, op zijn zwarte
rug zo blinkend zwart, zo
blinkend, blinkend zwart dat
het kind vergeet en inslaapt
zacht in zoete dromen.

De panter

Zo stroef langs de boerderij
alsof je niets zag van het
bliksemlicht en niets hoorde
van de man die
bij de moerassen gestorven is.
Zo onverschillig langs de vuile baan
alsof je niets zag van het groene
licht waarin een panter
worstelde en blind geworden is,
blind werd en worstelde tot het einde.

Vergeet

Vergeet me
en vergeef me.
Vergeet de slechte regen
en de zonneschijn van die dag.
Ga alleen
en smeek de goden,
ga zonder mij en smeek de goden
om hun eigen licht.

Matroos

Het kleine land
en het schip dat binnenloopt.
De kleine matroos die
aan wal stapt.
Het meisje dat lacht
en roept
Jij daar, jij kleine matroos!
De weide
Het verwijlen
en straks weer verder zeilen.
De valreep die wacht.

Anisha

Anisha
   de zakdoek
de donkerblauwe zakdoek
   je gebruikte hem
als blinddoek
      de blinddoek
Anisha
   om mij
      te vervoeren.
Je weet nog Anisha
die donkere zakdoek!

Alette Beaujon
Poems while in Delos

And this I am...

And this I am
I am the sky, another I
the writhing western waves
and like the stars
the headless strangers stare at me
the heady dangers of a macrocosmic
memory
the way I look at things
the way I walk and spread my wings
I find in blueness tombs
in redness embryonic rooms
and weigh each thought
before I think

I wear the rings of age
and carry keys of golden graves
I do not fit the womb - alive -
in myself reborn,
I do not fit this life
I fear these visions and these dreams
I feel the poetry of seas
and sail the sleeping isles
like Eros on a dolphin.

Delos and I

God forsaken Delos
barren solitude
the rock of rocks and granite grains
stones so dry they crumble in the sun
and yet I stayed
to measure these her riches
to drink the dryness gladly
to burn with her in the merciless suns
and to be swallowed like her
in waves of heat at noon

At night to die and drown
- finally immortal made -
at dawn we awake each morning
Delos and I.

In Greece I died

Moments of madness
of the maker
ignorant of time
inhabitant of all encompassing
spaceless life infection

There my dream will reach
the soundless courtesy of sleep
the unconditioned parallel embrace
of the dispassioned all
dismembered to its first ingredient
naughtness

In Greece I died
ten thousand years ago.

Delos - dawn

The sea is perfectly still
at sunrise near Delos
the heavy morning mist
has washed the dryness damp
of the yellow wilted plaats
and now my heart has opened
to her fallen ruins

Scattered shrines and torn
the far tossed temples of her gods
Her many mornings' wet aromas
made me dizzy
and her dawns delighted me

Mangled Apollo gazing
how I long to soothe him
to embrace the great sad whiteness
of his soul
his torso torn apart
I long to make him whole again
to make him live again
and walk with him on the Greek seas
from horizon to horizon
his heart white forzen never beats
at midday he is silent
among the murmuring ruins of Delos
the doves at dawn can't move his spirit
they fly back above the fallen broken pillars
at sundown
who knows where they alight

when the sun each noon kills living men
revives the walking spirit of the stones
Apollo never stirs

the cool mean madness of this desert
my gods
why do you nourish this madness
why do we long to live with ruins
the dead must rest
in peaceful oblivion
that is what we want
no foreign living instincts move us now
so let us be
if we have fallen
if we should fall
do not straighten our tired forms
never again to be reborn
let us linger only in your memory
Cover us again
and do not open our graves
Immortal horror of the never dying

this the morning song
of slowly rising ruins
my gods, I sing
I see at dawn the suffering of the dead
at dawn I die to live again
in other forms
to walk again the roads of man
unmoved - undying
yet dead with Apollo for ever
at Delos

Delos - the gods

In the sun where I sat
they sit and watch me silently
the columns and the naked gods
they feel with me the solitude
of stones
the perfect form
in sad completed joy

the careful balance ends
the trance of dreams

I sit and feel their presence
touching me
the air they breathe is hot
the air I breath is gladness
and my nightmare ends at Delos

the invisible
finally the flying fantoms of the tombs
at Delos
the womb unmeasured
meets my memory
and carries thoughts and colours

my vision clears
I am the freedom found at Delos
I am complete
freeborn I fly
and gather the gladness
of my madness realized.

Mood

I had a glad thought just now
but then it disappeared
I had a fond dream a moment ago
but I can't find it any more

Beauty slipped into my mind
and coloured every corner of my life
and happiness was mine
I had a feeling all was fine
I had a feeling all was free
I had a gladness
all agreeing
accepting all

A joyful sound rang through my head
I glanced the truth
the goodness of all being

All this is dead
All this is gone
and only this the memory I have
the beauty of a flower
seen so very long ago
the scent of seas
so very far
the undiscovered dream
when morning has her way

Having been
and vanished
now this feeling slowly dies.

Dreams

Everyday the same mad silence of my dreams
everyday the harboured colours kept
unmeasured
everyday the pale procession of the gods
everyday at Delos dies
the sentimental sees
the fast fleshed frenzied disagreement
soiled the grounds at Delos
I dare not pray in these surroundings
the hound dog race
of certain foreign gods
have glazed the playful pillars
demarcation made the stars retreat
unsmiling in the night
Ruins on the beaches beckon ships
at sunset nightmare hours
sailing hastily
the grace of Greeks - and garden gifts
the gladness of today
the happy hours stranded on the seas
the staring blossom
and the stillness of the little waves
now weave the symbols of
my dreams at noon.

Thoughts

We dare not see the magic
of the mad minds
the clear red reason
of Grecian gods -
the blue green sands of island seas
surround the ruins of the earth this world
this womb
where sanity is sacrificed
as prejudice
we play with marble blocks
in infant ways
collecting riddled answers
the pieces never heal when put together
never whole
my learned friends
the spirit, broken, shines yet forth
and doesn't need completion
So let the ancient devastated cities be
and never rearrange the sleeping pillars
in the yellow grecian grasses.

Today the sea is clearer
than far island mountained Tenos
today the sea to me is dearer
than all the precious Delian stones
I welcome her, the sun
and never looking back

I beckon to the coloured waves
today I let the ruined city be
and swim the whole day long
My tears will mingle with the waves
for sad I am today
sad with fear for
archaeologic relics
I have come down to kiss the sea
and not to visit Delian labyrinths
and mazes made by buried brothers.

Today this dread

Today this dread
the world with music mad
now greets the sun with darkness fed
now shines with shallow seas
now sings with nightborn tides
now every life - bourned creature hides
and crazed, this earth now turns
full speed - and ultimately dies
I know that all I see will end
at sad enslaved sunrise in the morrow
My voice has fled and flares no more
My eyes so full of stinging sand
now blindly stare
alone, my god, how long.
I am the undiscovered treasure
of my travels
a blind and bleeding passenger
when sacred ships are sinking
unheard, unseen
remaining in the farce
of freedom feeding folly
My God, now born to life
why breed this death end strife
in me
like new born kittens
craving sight

I drank your light
why did you poison me
prophetic vision burns in me
and kills all memory of cosmic right
the boundless negative
of which I am.

Madness

When I'm sick I'll sleep on marble
when I'm mad I'll frighten people
with my magic
when I'm dead I'll haunt you with
my shadow

And when my ghost appears
the wetsplashed rocks turn into fish
all this is when I fall
all this when I'm mad

I'll greet the clouds white clad
I'll slepe with waves now dead

My hair grown black and long
shall flow
I'll swim in green dim underwater worlds
an undiscovered blue of distances
when men are fish and breathe no more
the water womb of mother essence

Frank incense maddens me
and when I'm in your churches
ever shall I cry
and hoarsely hoard my proud collected
psalms and pictures paradise
the laughing priest of the dead villagers
left eating sheep
to chant his message

with three hours' fasting
hallowed bread at last
and when I'm mad I'll go to church
and seek frank incense
this the smoke of death
and when I'm sad I'll seek the seas
to show each wave its destination
suicide against the rocks
and storms are staged
for reckless crazy laughter wrecked
at last fatigue of madness lived
expressed
shall swallow me
I'll float a Caribbean corpse
and visit all the friendly ports

And when my ghost appears
the wetsplashed rocks turn into fish
All this is when I fall
All this is when I'm mad.

Sunset

Why did Delos suddenly become
so orange pink
why is every thought I think
so mad
and why is every song I sing
so sad
at sunset
my twilight fears I would forget
and see the moon again
the white smooth source of silver springs
flowing floating
on the silent seas
My questions
are never answered
in this lazy language of the brain
but in the living idiom of each day.

God abandoned

I fight the memory of things unsaid
I fight the lonely measure of my solitude
the mercury of thoughts not given
flows - a restless heavy stream
I hold my hollow heart
now torn apart
with all this lazy longing
the mighty menace and the madness
of belonging to another race
I bid the welcome strangers stay
for death dreams held me in their sway
and all that I could not say
and all that to the world I could not tell
for ever fearing other dangers
daring death
and death oriented life
my sin, this sadness do I carry
unexpressed
The biting current of my maddened mother's
heritage
is being fed by undiscovered rivers
in the jungle of my other self
the reckless waves now break
white bleeding drops
of warring stubbornness

I hold my well
in the courage to be
myself - I am the well of all that I see
I am the measure of my mind
But a storm is raging in this hill of hills
and I am now - god abandoned.

Delos

Today my heart is fasting
and the timed texture of the mind
is gravely measured in the ways
of ancient temple stones
The incense stored since early years
is flowing now
intoxicating
hallowed atmosphere
In many symbols
do my thoughts escape
my memory unconscious inspiration
like the moon
in rhythmic seasons growing
full of liquid light
my writing now is poured
full flaring on the waves
floating
a path so constant seeming
sadly trembles with each cosmic swaying
In the never ending night
I need no congregation
In the green enchantment of the milky ways
I wait to see
the white blossoming of the world
the dreadful dawn
yet like the flowers of the night
blooming only at midnight
like my dreams
perfume and heavy heaven honey

on the festered flesh
the bright glad suffering of unseen seas
My God the night is round
and red
the gods are round
each one a moon
so round
the light is slow
and limps from stone to scone
this dawn
the walking days
each ruined Delos
bones - unburied bones
are lying
bleached now in the summer sun
and sadness swells my brain
the skeletons - the carcasses
now rocks and stoney growths
are blind
let me never see them live again
I lie unburied - singing
I wish some day to drown these pains
to play with gods
forgetting all the ghostly sins of man
the moon will shine
and I will find her womb - the wine
the dizzy answer of my dreams
the moon will die at last
and I will crave no more
and write no more

I will hide no more.

Delos - night

Now sleep tonight came fast
now thoughts tonight slow down at last
now lying down I read the dreams
of sad grown men
New moon shines splintered
silver rays too small
and all the tired waves
still beat against my head
the stones of Delos disappeared
and gradually
my mind arranged these thoughts
The poems living
in my colored dreams
now soothed
the pattern of my praying.

Frans de Vries

Overeenkomst

onuitsprekelijk leed over de mensheid
wild gebarend zetten zij zich neer
woede - protest - schaamte - onmacht
bannen zij uit de gesel
die hun het geweten verkracht

waarheid achter woorden schuil
holle frasen schoon geklonken
vreedzame beslechting en beveiliging
van onze geslachten
zij vandaag zich nog redeloos bezinnen
openlijke hoon der gedachten
vergeefs - de krachten verspild
de woorden de leuzen dansen triomf
het valse papieren leven
vol bedrog van schijn en goede sier

de wilde gebaren zijn gebleven
in boze vreugde om het spel van geluk
onbekommerd dat de dodelijk bedreigden
huiverend versagen
door de fantomen afgewend
door de mens begeerd

Massa

de gillende fluit
ze komen de poort uitgedrongen
omhuld door warm zweten
in brede drommen beelden
de huizenblokken aaneengerijd
het rinkelend verkeer in stoploze drang
als slaven gaan zij heen vergeten
leven en stof dooreengesmeten
doelloos oog en lot op niets gericht

slechts één het hoofd heft
tot klaar gezang van vogel
verdwaald op dorre tak
door kwijnende twijfel moe gezwicht
hij keert op zijn tred
naar lang gedachte verten

zonder moed nu de schouders bevrijd
een nieuw mens geboren
waar de zonde zo anders is

Zijn

de vruchten die neerhangen zwaar van sap
zij blijven niet
de bebloede zon in de lage verte
onze gedachten verstrooit in een wazige leegte
tot de stille schemermijmering
door ongeziene schichten
die duisternis doorkruisen
ons wekt tot het leven van het zijn
de vruchten die neerhangen - zij blijven.

Liefde

jubelend ons wezen doorgloeid
het bloed gestuwd met grote kracht
door de adren van het verleden
gezuiverd van zuchtende leegte gebracht
berustend in onbestemde zorgen
het raadsel aan de dag getreden
geen geheimenis meer morgen
met treden de weg verkennen
naar de eindeloze ruimte
die het leven de adem geeft

Ramp

ik houd in mijn hand de brokken
zij passen niet meer
in bruut geweld vaneengereten
waar is de moed nu opnieuw
voor gevecht om behoud als bezeten

der kinderen wijsheid is de domme macht
die martelaar verheft tot held
geef een beeld - zo ik vergete
de gedachte die mij kwelt

lig ik in aanbidding terneer
voor het offer van uw bloed
in eensgezindheid stromend vergoten
gij allen zonder beeld ook

Brunilda Vizoso

Agonía lunar

Junto a la cerca se cuelga la luna a dormitar: Tiene largos cabellos la luna verde y blanca, largos cabellos húmedos. Calladamente el campo se ha acostado a su luz, callada y amorosamence se empapa en su bálsamo y hay en esa quietud de sencilleces cándidas una suril añoranza de inocencia.

Los largos cabellos de la luna me buscan como caminos albos y por su invitación llevada voy cruzando veredas de eternidad.

Junto a mi pie desnudo para mejor sentir su claridad, un caracoi de nácar se ha prendido y acogiéndolo voy con él en mis manos, pensando a Dios, al bien, al mal

Y aquí, a solas con la tierra y la luz, cavilando en perdidas edades, me hago la suprema pregunta, sin temor, serenamente: Es necesario Dios?...

Al peso del enigma me he sentado delicadamente en una piedra - no quiero perturbar su sueño - yo, a solas frente al universo, y hay grandeza, hay recóndita armonía en esta soledad.

...El tiempo ha sido cruenco con mi caracol, su superficie áspera y desigual me habla de lluvias y de soles; ha perdido la protectora negrura de su capa y entre mis manos quietas, brilla blanca su corazón de nácar...

Atraída por sus fulgores, descubro que estoy en campo sagrado: campo de caracoles, campo de indios, camposanto y ruina de edades preteritas.

‘Si en esta hora tan serena y fría no fuera yo una estrella más, con manos que mi afán haría invencibles descubriría el

secreto de tus tumbas, indio! Pero no temas, no se inquiete el polvo en polvo convertido, que en esta noche de resplandor arcano, soy un arcano más, soy un enigma, como esa estrella que ante tí relumbra...!'

Las alas

- Madre, mi maestra dice que si soy buena me crecerán alas para volar.

- Sí, niña mía, y un día levantarás tu vuelo hacia lo azul. Desde arriba serán los rechados de la aldea como una inmensa siembra de amapolas que el viento con ímpetu aventó.

- Llegaré a las estrellas?

- Y por caminos de plata basta la luna y al sol en los atardeceres ruborosos. Y yo te veré ir, y tendrá miedo mi amor, a tu ternura hecho, mas no te llamré, chiquilla mía, que es del hombre encontrarse en lo azul del universo.

- Y volaré muy alto?

- Y volarás muy alto. Y llegará el milano con sus obscuras alas tu busca de astros a perseguir con giros crueles. Y aquí, desde el tejado para verte mejor, te gritará mi corazón de madre, al temor como un puño comprimido:! Hacia la altura, hija mía, hacia la altura, que al milano rapaz tan sólo vence el abrigo seguro de las cumbres!...

- Madre,? no sientes como empiezan a crecer mis alas?

Agonia solar

La panza henchida de la tierra palpita en agonía sedienta, mientras la oprime el sol con anillos de fuego.

Pintor alucinado, el sol dibuja círculos que como dardos potentes apuntan hacia eras y aloës. Morados y redondos como tumores dolientes estallan a su impacto los frutos de los cactos, rezumando un humor espeso y dulce que, gota a gota, en vano intenta humedecer las piedras: parece sangre el jugo de los datos, sangre exprimida a la sed sin alivio de esta tierra.

Moscas iridiscentes beben con delirante afán el rojo zumo y en la tarde inmóvil blancas nubes trazan mentidas esperanzas en el cielo.

Cola Debrot

De gaucho

De zoele wind
streelt langs de droge lippen
van de gaucho,
speelt met de manen
en de staart van zijn paard.
Drie weken lang hebben de dieren gegraasd,
hun dorst gelest,
zonder oordeel des onderscheids
gehurkt, gesnurkt;
geschurkt, gekurkt.
Drie weken lang,
maar nu heeft de kudde
haar rust doorbroken.
Zij kan niet langer
haar opwelling weerstaan.
De kudde in stampeed
stuift naar een onherkenbaar doel.
De dieren stuiven voort,
het leven stroomt uit hun neusgaten.
Hoe onwaarschijnlijk eender
zijn deze dieren
op een enkele na
die van terzijde opneemt
met zijn glazen blik,
het boze oog
zoals men zegt

wanneer men later
veel later,
van het onheil spreekt.
De gaucho houdt zijn piek gereed
Het paard is vlees geworden onverschilligheid
Het laat een lange
staartvlechtscheet
een paardescheet
zonder innerlijke overtuiging
zonder uiterlijke noodzaak.
De gaucho staart naar de verte
naar het zichtbaar dalen van de zon
die zich verdrievoudigt
tussen vuilgroene wolkenhagen.
Hij weifelt tussen mijmeringen
en herinneringen.
Mijmeringen
van de Virgen del Valle
van de Virgen de Coromoto.
Herinneringen
aan de gewilligheden
van de puta's van de llano.
De virgens en de puta's,
de maagden en de hoeren,
zij dragen eendere namen
Maria Margaretha Magdalena
Misschien zal ik de avond niet meer halen
Zij dragen eendere mooie namen
Zij zingen met engelekelen
of kwelen in de bordelen
De wolken jagen in het luchtruim

Wat kan het schelen?
Zij kwelen en zij strelen
Het wordt onheilspellend stil op aarde
Bid voor ons.
Bid voor de gaucho's. Amen.

Mededeling

Van de medewerkers en bijdragen in dit nummer kan het volgende worden medegedeeld.

Florette Morand, geboren 20 juni 1926 te Morne à l'Eau op Guadeloupe, Franse Antillen, heeft onder meer gepubliceerd de gedichtenbundels ‘Mon Coeur est un oiseau des îles’ (1954, met een voorwoord van Paul Fort) en ‘Chanson pour ma Savane’ (1958, met een voorwoord van Pierre Mac Orlan) en een reeks vertellingen ‘Béguines’ (1956). De hierbij geboden vertalingen van Dr. Daniel de Graaf komen in het oorspronkelijk voor in de twee eerstgenoemde verzamelingen, met uitzondering van de gedichten ‘Lente’, ‘Avond op de Antillen’ en ‘Ik ben niet van hier’ die naar het manuscript zijn vertaald. De dichteres, die werkzaam is bij het onderwijs op haar geboorte-eiland, heeft verschillende Europese reizen gemaakt, waarbij zij onder meer Frankrijk, Zwitserland en België heeft bezocht.

Bernardo Ashetu, geboren 4 maart 1929 te Paramaribo, heeft zijn ervaringen voornamelijk opgedaan als een van die varensgezellen in het Caribisch Gebied die halsstarrig hopen op een betere toekomst, waarin zij niet geloven.

Voor nadere bijzonderheden omtrent *Alette Beaujon* moge worden verwezen naar Antilliaanse Cahiers Tweede Jaargang no. 3 en 4. De Delische gedichten in dit nummer werden geschreven gedurende haar verblijf in Griekenland van juni tot november 1957.

Frans de Vries, Mr. F.P. de Vries, geboren 6 november 1911 te 's-Gravenhage, heeft verschillende administratieve functies ia de Nederlandse Antillen bekleed en is thans Algemeen Secretaris van de Nederlandse Antillen.

Brunilda Vizoso, Brunilda Maria Haydee Vizoso de Pina, geboren 27 september 1925 te Ciudad Trujillo in de Dominikaanse Republiek, woont thans op Aruba, waar zij in 1945 in het huwelijk is getreden met Nicolás Piña, thans hoofd van de Voorlichtingsdienst op Aruba. Het slotgedicht ‘De Gaucho’ verscheen voor de eerste maal in het Nederlands maandblad ‘Tirade’.

Red. Ant. Cahiers